DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 014 PS 025 651

AUTHOR	Novick, Rebecca
TITLE	Successful Early Childhood Education in an Imperfect World: Lessons Learned from Four Northwest Schools. Program Report.
INSTITUTION	Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Nov 96
NOTE	146p.
CONTRACT	RJ96006501
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Change Agents; *Change Strategies; Constructivism (Learning); *Culturally Relevant Education; *Early Childhood Education; Educational Change; Educational Innovation; Effective Schools Research; Emergent Literacy; Multicultural Education; Profiles; *Staff Development; Teaching Methods; Teamwork; Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Alaska; Developmentally Appropriate Programs; Montana; Oregon; Washington

ABSTRACT

This report describes four innovative and culturally responsive early childhood education programs in Montana, Washington, Alaska, and Oregon. The introduction discusses developmentally appropriate early education and effective teaching practices. The report devotes one chapter to each site, with profiles and "close-ups" of selected classrooms presented from information gained through classroom observation, document review, and interviews with teachers and principals. Program components at the Cherry Valley Elementary School in Polson, Montana include the themes of literacy and caring, using teamwork to move toward developmentally appropriate practices, ongoing staff development, school-wide curricular change, an integrated problem-solving approach to learning, and family-school-community partnerships. The Helen Baller Elementary School in Camas, Washington emphasizes providing a safe, supportive place for children with exceptional needs, focusing on children's strengths, and developing a balanced curriculum. The Harborview/Capital Elementary School in Juneau, Alaska gives equal attention to children's social, emotional, and esthetic development along with logical/mathematical and verbal knowledge, and emphasizes a family-like atmosphere through multiage classrooms, multicultural awareness, and parent partnerships. The Mary Harrison Primary School in Toledo, Oregon uses a constructivist approach to promote literacy and problem solving skills, multiage grouping, and culturally responsive teaching, and uses dialogue to plan curricular changes, inservice training, and assessment procedures. The report's final chapter highlights the effective components of the four programs; examines the connection to current research and theory regarding learning, literacy, teaching, and assessment; and the role of state standards in early childhood education. School philosophies and sample materials are appended. Contains approximately 65 references. (KDFB)

ED 410 014

THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
PROGRAM REPORT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SUCCESSFUL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD:

Lessons Learned from Four Northwest Schools

Rebecca Novick, Ph.D.

November 1996

Child and Family Program
Theresa H. Elofson, Ph.D., Directe-

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

PS 025651

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This publication is based on work sponsored wholly, or in part, by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, under Contract Number RJ96006501. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

SUCCESSFUL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD:

LESSONS LEARNED FROM FOUR NORTHWEST SCHOOLS

Rebecca Novick, Ph.D

November 6, 1996

Child and Family Program
Theresa H. Elofson, Ph.D., Director

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Cherry Valley Elementary School, Polson, Montana 6

Helen Baller Elementary School, Camas, Washington 27

Harborview/Capital Elementary School, Juneau, Alaska 39

Mary Harrison Primary School, Toledo, Oregon 55

Putting Children and Families First 78

References 88

INTRODUCTION

> We see the practice of teaching as Schon (1983, 1987) does, as an art that eludes technical description, analysis, and systematization. The art of practice is not merely a means to an end or a search for solutions; rather, it weaves means and ends, and the goal is to transform through understanding (Stott & Bowman, 1996).

Over the last half century, research from a variety of disciplines has provided support for approaches to education that are responsive to how children learn and develop. Variously referred to as "teaching for understanding" (Cohen, McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993), culturalism (Bruner, 1996), developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) (Bredekamp, 1987; Bowman, 1994), and the transactional model (Weaver, cited in Braunger, 1995), these approaches have emerged from the Weberian tradition that emphasizes "verstehen," the interpretative understanding of human experience and information (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

In this view, learning is viewed as an active process, driven by the innate need of all people to make meaning of their experiences. Children, rather than *receiving* meaning from expert adults, *construct* and *negotiate* knowledge and understanding through interaction with the social and physical environment. Thus, learning involves the personal discovery and interpretation by the learner of the meaning of events for him or her. Each new discovery changes or refines prior knowledge, building a complex network of interconnected concepts (Kostelnik, 1992).

Early Childhood

Young children, in particular, need to establish a rich, solid conceptual base from which all future learning will proceed (Kostelnik, 1992). Such a base enables children to make sense of their experience by forming connections between what they know and understand and the knowledge and concepts encountered in the new environment. Without this base, learning facts and isolated skills may resemble nonsense-syllable learning, often quickly mastered and just as quickly forgotten. Early childhood educators are concerned that children have the capacity and opportunities to *use* their knowledge and skills within the context of meaningful activities, both inside and outside the classroom. As Doris Lessing has observed, true learning is understanding something on deeper and deeper levels.

Over the last nine years, due in large part to the influence of DAP, the field of early childhood education has seen a great deal of change in its educational practices. Based on theories of Dewey, Vygotsky, Piaget, and Ericson, developmentally appropriate practices reflect an interactive, constructivist view of learning. Although followers of Piaget have emphasized the child's individual construction of knowledge, due to increasing attention to Vygotsky's theoretical framework, educators are beginning to understand that "making sense" is a profoundly social process, one in which culture and individual development are mutually embedded (Bowman & Stott, 1994). Developmentally appropriate education in the primary grades is characterized by a number of practices:

- **Role of teacher.** In this interactive approach to learning, the role of the teachers has been described as a planner of possibilities, a guide, ethnologist, researcher, and co-constructor of knowledge (Malaguzzi, 1994; Phillips, 1993). In this view, although "teaching as telling" (Lieberman, 1995; Meier, 1995) is still a part of the educational process, it is only a part. As Bruner (1996) observes, "Even if we are the only species that 'teaches deliberately' and 'out of the context of use,' this does not mean that we should convert this evolutionary step into a fetish" (p. 22).

  In this environment, the role of the teacher is neither to dispense information nor rely solely on the child's maturation; rather, it is to enhance children's development and learning by collaborating with children in joint activities, chosen to fit the child's level of *potential* development, or to use Vygotsky's term, the "zone of proximal development." According to Vygotsky:

  > What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction . . . must be aimed not so much at the ripe as the ripening functions. It remains necessary to determine the lowest threshold at which instruction in, say, mathematics may begin, since a certain minimal ripeness of functions is required. But we must consider the upper threshold as well; instruction must be oriented toward the future; not the past (cited in Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 104).

- **Integrated curriculum.** Because the human brain works best when processing meaningful information, language development and emerging literacy are encouraged through the use of whole language approaches, which embed learning throughout the day in meaningful activities. To reflect the inter-relatedness of developmental domains, curriculum is integrated, using strategies which include learning and activity centers and conceptual organizers, or thematic units. These themes or projects link content from various subject areas and depict the connections that exist across disciplines.

  Mathematics, rather than being thought of as a set of skills and procedures that children must acquire, is seen as the science of searching for order and pattern in the world around us (National Research Council, 1989). In order to understand how numbers apply to real life, children are given many opportunities for hands-on experience with pegboards, blocks, number lines, and materials for counting and measuring. Rather than memorizing facts and rules, children actively participate in their learning, inventing their own procedures for solving computational and story problems. In Kamii's words (1989), in the constructivist approach, children "reinvent arithmetic."

- **Authentic assessment**. Using strategies that build on the strengths of all children, the primary purpose of assessment (rather than measuring, comparing, ranking, and tracking) is to construct understandings about children that guide educational decisions. Authentic assessments that reflect the child's performance during typical activities in the classroom are the primary assessment strategy.

- **Cooperative learning.** Instead of encouraging competition among children, school staff strive to build classroom and school environments that foster cooperative learning and a sense of individual and shared responsibility. Children are encouraged to learn from and with each other in classrooms and schools that help children learn, in Eisner's words (1991), "to develop an ethic of caring and create a community that cares."

We Want It All

Yet, as Tyack and Tobin (1993) point out, "our idea of a 'real school' is remarkably resistant to change." The factory-model school with a goal of "using educational technology to 'stamp' a uniform education on all students" (Bowman, 1994) is deeply entrenched in American educational thinking. But if education was originally instituted to meet the needs of the work place for a well-disciplined, homogeneous, semi-literate work force to "man" the factories and assembly lines, the ideal employee of the twenty-first century is quite unlike Henry Ford's ideal. Instead of being "a pair of hands," he or she will be expected to be adept at finding, using, and making sense of information, problem-solving, thinking critically and imaginatively, resolving conflict, and understanding diversity. Schools are expected to address all the possible goals of schooling – academic, social, vocational, and personal – or, as both Goodlad (1984) and Boyer (1983) observed, "we want it all."

However, because the demands made on teachers to "produce" the ideal employee and citizen of the twenty-first century are sometimes contradictory, teaching for understanding may be merely added on to a curriculum designed to meet positivist assumptions of objectivity and efficiency. Thus, teachers are often exhorted to:

- Encourage active, engaged, in-depth learning *and* cover the subject area
- Emphasize multiple intelligences *and* increase standardized test scores
- Facilitate higher-order thinking *and* memorization of discrete facts
- Nurture individual development *and* get everyone to the same destination at the same time
- Create schools which are exciting, lively places that engender enthusiasm for learning (Clark & Astuto, 1994) *and* maintain orderly classrooms in which all students are quietly "on task"

Of course, good teachers must, on a daily basis, balance these seemingly dichotomous expectations and often they must do so in a context of increasing need and diminishing resources. Ironically, as schools are increasingly becoming key players in reducing violence and criminal behavior, nurturing resilience, and providing a safe haven for at-risk youngsters, many states have seen their educational and human resources budgets remain the same or even shrink. According to Orfield (1994):

> One of the distinguishing differences between the education reform debate in the 1990s and the excellence movement in the 1980s is that there is virtually no momentum to provide substantial additional resources to accomplish these new goals. In the late 1980s many states adopted substantial additional resources to accomplish these new goals; many states adopted new taxes. Now the assumption is that new and substantial resources are not needed. This means that there are intensified demands on schools and districts, many

of whom are already experiencing severe fiscal stress and no significant funding for new staff or serious new training.

How do teachers balance the often conflicting demands of covering the curriculum and making sense of things, getting children ready for next year and encouraging what Malaguzzi (1994) refers to as "the hundred languages of children," preparing children for the world of work and helping children reach their development potential; preparing children both to live successfully in their own culture and in the dominant culture; addressing the challenges of equity and excellence in a context of growing economic inequality? These are some of the questions explored in this paper.

Site Profiles

If it is our growing knowledge of human development that has spearheaded change in educational philosophy, it is school staff who have turned these theories into learning experiences for children. The goal of writing this paper is to tie exemplary school and classroom practices with the research base that supports these practices. "I understand the theory but what does it look like in a real classroom with 27 children?" is a question that many teachers ask as they begin the journey of changing their educational practices to better meet the needs of children and families.

Over the past year, the Child and Family Program has worked in partnership with a number of innovative Northwest schools, studying, discussing, and documenting the challenges, as well as the opportunities, presented by these educators' efforts to change their educational practices. These sites were chosen because staff not only demonstrate innovative and culturally responsive curricular practices, but are also taking active steps toward comprehensive, family-centered approaches to meet the needs of young children. They are committed to a philosophy of education based on both teaching *for* understanding and learning *as* understanding. The sites are:

Cherry Valley Elementary School in Polson, Montana
Helen Baller Elementary School, in Camas, Washington
Harborview/Capital Elementary School, in Juneau, Alaska
Mary Harrison Elementary School, in Toledo, Oregon

To provide a glimpse into the cultures of these schools, site profiles and "close-ups" of selected classrooms were developed.

Cherry Valley Elementary School illustrates the success that comes from seven years of changing practices through an inquiry model of staff development, based on teamwork, a shared sense of responsibility, practice, dialogue, and reflection. This case study captures staff reflections about the change process and describes how Cherry Valley staff have worked to define and implement a literacy program based on a definition of literacy that includes numeracy, the arts, and the emotions.

At Helen Baller Elementary School, located near Vancouver, Washington and across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon, early intervention is considered key to helping children succeed. Their educational philosophy emphasizes establishing caring relationships, building on strengths, offering choices, and encouraging responsibility, problem-solving, literacy, and communication skills. This case study describes how staff have integrated this philosophy throughout the school community.

The seven teachers at Harborview/Capital Elementary School provide highly creative experiences for their culturally and economically diverse kindergarten through second grade children. This profile describes exciting, lively classrooms, in which music and the visual arts are woven throughout the curriculum, and teachers who value and encourage conversation and social interaction as an integral part of learning.

A small rural school near the Oregon coast, Mary Harrison Primary School serves a student population with widely disparate socioeconomic backgrounds and a wide range of needs and abilities. The early childhood background of many teachers is obvious in their implementation of an integrated curriculum, based on a constructivist philosophy, and establishment of a caring, nonhierarchical community that includes families, children, and staff. This profile describes their educational practices, as well as one teacher's journal reflections, as staff work together to help all children develop positive attitudes toward school and learning.

The profiles are the result of site visits that included classroom observations, document review, and interviews with teachers and principals. Time precluded observing all classrooms and interviewing all teachers in these schools. However, the principals and teachers, whose voices and classrooms are included, made it clear that theirs is a team effort and insisted on sharing the spotlight with all members of the learning community.

CHERRY VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
POLSON, MONTANA

> What students bring to class is where learning begins. It starts there and goes places (Ira Shor, 1992).

Who in the World Is Maki?

It's secretary's day and children in all 16 of Cherry Valley's preschool through third grade classrooms are engaging in discussions about secretaries in general, and Maki, the school's secretary, in particular. This is an especially important secretary's day, because Maki, who has served as the secretary for over 17 years, is retiring in a few short weeks. The discussions, as well as the many ways that children express their appreciation of Maki, reveal that she will be remembered for far more than collecting milk money, Xeroxing, dispensing supplies, and answering the phones (although of course, she performs all these office duties and more). Maki is a friend who will be sorely missed.

In a second grade classroom, a large sign reads, "Who in the world is Maki?" Children are brainstorming the many ways they might describe Maki in their group letter to her. Their final letter reads:

> Dear Maki,
>
> You are helpful, thoughtful, always happy, smile a lot, are caring, kind, funny, cheerful, work very hard, love kids, *and* give hugs.
>
> Thank you,
>
> Ms. Fisher's second grade class

Down the hall, in a first grade classroom, children are preparing to write a draft of their part of what will be a group created book, entitled "Our Friend Maki," which will be presented to Maki upon her retirement. After a group brainstorming session about the many duties of secretaries, their teacher models writing his own contribution to the book. He asks the class, "I know Maki takes messages and makes copies for me. But she does other things too. How would I put that in writing?"

With the group's help with ideas, punctuation, and spelling, he writes on chart pack, "Maki is my friend because she helps me with all kinds of things I need." Now, suggests the teacher, "Close your eyes for a minute and think of all the different ways Maki has helped you this year: The times I sent you to her when you were hurt on the playground, how she helped in the lunchroom. Now think of one time in particular." The children sit quietly for almost a minute, eyes squinched in concentration. "OK, open your eyes and you're ready to begin writing."

Creating a Caring Community

These activities combine two themes that take top priority at Cherry Valley, literacy and caring. In fact, the philosophy statement (See Appendix A) developed by the staff of this rural school in Polson, Montana defines literacy in a way that *includes* caring: "Literacy is the primary and most essential goal for all students. Literacy is defined as proficiency in not only the written and spoken word, but also includes numeracy, the arts, and the emotions." Because staff at Cherry Valley believe that "learning occurs most effectively in a culture that is safe and nurturing," staff work hard to build community, inside and outside of school, forming partnerships with parents and community members.

According to principal Elaine Meeks, creating a positive school environment, as seen through the eyes of the child, is essential to convey the school's overriding belief: "Every child counts." At Cherry Valley, as a number of teachers told me, no one says to a teacher, "It's your child, why can't you make him behave?" Instead, a shared sense of responsibility for all children helps assure that even high risk children do not fall through the cracks. For such children, staff may initiate what they have dubbed "a school-wide adoption." As one teacher put it, "When we identify a child who is having problems, we cut him a little more slack, give him lots of positive reinforcement. Everywhere he goes, even in the hallways, we build him up. Kids turn around, you should see the shoulders go back."

The philosophy that discipline is always instructive, never punitive, ensures a positive approach to children's behavioral difficulties. Staff consider it their responsibility to figure out what individual children need and to help them develop positive attitudes and behaviors. Children, in turn, are expected to take ownership for their learning and social interactions, reflect on their feelings and behaviors and, when appropriate, develop a plan with their teacher. Working collaboratively to establish classroom rules is another strategy that helps children develop into capable and caring people. As one teacher explained:

> Control is not the way; rules can't be imposed from above. We need classrooms based on trust and mutual respect. When children's behavior gets out of my comfort level, I bring them together, and say, 'I wasn't comfortable with that. How did you feel?' I remind them that I can't do it without their help and ask, 'What could we do to help us feel safe and comfortable?'

This philosophy is pervasive at Cherry Valley. The philosophy statement asserts, "All students are expected to become confident, resourceful, disciplined, and self-motivated learners. Responsibility to self and community are emphasized." Fostering cooperation, rather than competition among children and among staff, creates a climate in which everyone is encouraged to help each other solve problems, share expertise, listen respectfully to one another, and resolve conflict openly and honestly. Meeks only half-jokingly noted that this approach has been so successful that their "main discipline problem consists of children skipping down the hall because they're so happy to be here."

Staff consider this emphasis on teamwork and community to be a crucial element in the school's continually evolving interpretation and implementation of developmentally appropriate practices

(DAP) and culturally responsive teaching. In 1994, staff developed the basic principles that guide practice at Cherry Valley:

- The best interests of the child are the basis of all decisions and actions. (child centered)
- Each child's learning potential is recognized, with the belief that all children can learn.
- The child is not viewed in isolation, but as part of a family which influences their learning.
- The environment that the school provides is safe, nurturing, and one in which all children can be successful.
- The school is an inclusive community, where each individual is valued and has access to all aspects of the school program.
- Team process is part of effective decision making.
- Instructional practices are guided by a shared philosophy. The philosophy reflects current "best practices" as determined by research (personal and in the literature).
- All certified staff have the responsibility to engage in self-reflection and professional development to improve and expand their skills and knowledge. The principal has the responsibility to support teachers in meeting their need for professional development.

How have staff at Cherry Valley arrived at a shared philosophy and goals? And how do they work toward their goal of meeting children's holistic learning needs in a mutually supportive, collaborative school community?

Moving Toward Developmentally Appropriate Practices

The Early Stages

Located on the southern shores of Flathead Lake, the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi, and on the outskirts of the Flathead Indian Reservation, Cherry Valley Elementary School serves a culturally and economically diverse student body. Increasing numbers of children come from families who live at or below the poverty line, with almost 60 percent qualifying for free or reduced lunch. In addition, a large proportion of Native American children challenges the predominantly white middle class teaching staff to examine their own values, in order to provide a school environment that reduces cultural discontinuities and builds on the strengths of all children.

Seven years ago, Elaine Meeks became principal at Cherry Valley. Although she was the first woman administrator in the district, she had already been a special education teacher at Cherry Valley for eight years. At that time, whereas most staff felt that DAP was being implemented, there was a lack of consensus on what, in fact, DAP was. Meeks determined to place a high priority on professional development and to reach building level consensus on developmentally appropriate practice.

In her 16 years as a teacher, Meeks had seen a lot of change. She observed that in the late 1970s and 80s, a downward extension of academic curricula into kindergarten led teachers to "see how quiet the kids could be and how much seat work they could complete." During this time, she gradually learned to articulate her own philosophy about how children learn and develop. But she also knew, that like children, adults need to construct their own understandings and theories: "A vision needs to be collective; it emerges from the culture. You can't get people to support someone else's vision." Utilizing what she refers to as a "female, relationship-based model of administration," the change that she envisioned was and continues to be a slow process, whose primary approach to staff development involves individual and collective inquiry into best practices.

Working in partnership with staff, Meeks originally spent a lot of time observing and questioning. For example, she might ask, "Why did you group the children the way you did?" In this way, teachers were asked to articulate their own theories of practices, moving from, "That's the way we've always done it" to more in-depth study and research into their practices. Rather than technicians, teachers are viewed (and encouraged to view themselves) as professional educators. From the beginning, teachers responded positively to this approach and both teachers and students increasingly engaged in experiential learning activities centered around themes, including multicultural topics. Teachers valued these educational explorations and formed study groups to discuss such books as Regie Routman's *Transitions and Invitations*, books that many schools have used for support in making the change to more meaning-focused approaches to reading and writing.

But not everyone was comfortable with the changes. A number of teachers expressed concern that children were not learning skills systematically. There was also concern at the district level, where some personnel saw weaknesses in third graders' skills as evidence that the literacy program was not adequately preparing students. At Cherry Valley, actual classroom practices ranged from providing experiences that reflected a developmental approach to isolated phonics instruction and worksheets. In order to resolve some of these tensions, staff engaged in a number of activities that eased the transition to developmentally appropriate practices and allayed the fears of those who were "worried about getting the children ready for next year."

The Power of Teamwork

Despite these tensions or perhaps even fueled by staff concerns and disagreements, Cherry Valley's staff development activities, emphasizing inquiry and collaboration, continued to expand. In the spring of 1992, Meeks and a self-selected team of teachers participated in a NWREL summer institute, "Building Equity in Early Literacy: A Team Approach," as part of a project entitled "Equity in Early Literacy Development." With the goal of helping schools implement a coherent, school-wide literacy program, the institute provided workshops on literacy improvement topics and facilitated team-planning sessions. Avoiding the pitfalls of the "one-shot workshop," whose effects on enhancing best practices are often minimal, schools participating in the project met periodically at regional professional meetings to make presentations and reflect on their experience with the team approach to literacy program improvement (Braunger, 1995).

The institute experience proved to be a catalyst for the team process as a basis for decision making, which staff view as crucial for building a school-wide community. Central to the experience was the collaborative development by each school team of a School Literacy Improvement Plan (SLIP). Tailored to their school's literacy needs and specifying literacy program improvement goals and support strategies, these plans were introduced to the rest of the school staff for discussion and revision (Braunger, 1995). The original goals developed at the summer institute were: (1) reach building-level consensus on developmentally appropriate practice and (2) develop a comprehensive plan for implementation of thematic units.

The Literacy Leadership Team. It has been the emphasis on reaching building-level consensus on developmentally appropriate practice that has ensured that all teachers are included in the school improvement vision. Teachers who work in self-contained subgroups (dubbed Balkanized cultures by Hargreaves, 1994) may struggle competitively for resources and principals' favor, making it hard to develop professional relationships based on trust and sharing of resources. At Cherry Valley, staff avoided this fragmentation of professional relationships by expanding the Summer Institute Team to a Literacy Leadership Team. Although membership is voluntary, Meeks reports that everyone wants to part of the team; over the past four years, the team has included almost every teacher in the school and has been expanded to include parents and support staff. Meeks observes, "No one is required to go but our commitment to kids means that people put in extra time because they want to.

By the spring of 1993, the team had developed, with staff input, the "Primary Education Philosophy," which is revisited each year, a process described by Meeks as "a wonderful experience that reflects the power of the school as a whole." The philosophy statement emphasizes the importance of shared responsibility for creating a positive environment for children's learning and the importance of active engagement and social interaction in children's construction of understanding.

An important step in the effort to reach consensus on developmentally appropriate practice was the team's development of a literacy program survey during the 1994-95 school year. Teachers' detailed responses were used as a basis for developing *the Literacy Program Guidelines for Cherry Valley School* (see Appendix B). To ensure consensus, the document, like the earlier statements, was sent out in draft form to all teachers and revised accordingly. The guidelines stress the interrelationship of oral language, listening, reading, and writing and articulate the overall goal of the literacy program: "To ensure that all children become able readers, writers, speakers, and listeners and are critical thinkers who can take responsibility for and direct their own lifetime of learning."

Changing Practices

By the 1992-93 school year, Cherry Valley had made a number of changes in classroom practices. Almost all classrooms had increased their use of children's literature. Teachers read aloud to students on a daily basis and parents were encouraged to do the same. Worksheets and basals had been replaced with books from a number of sources, including Richard C. Owen (*Ready to Read Series*), The Wright Group (*Sunshine, Story Box, Twig*) *Pegasus, Rigby*, and a number of trade books. That same year, Cherry Valley invited community members to participate as guest readers in "Celebrate Literacy Week," a project collaboratively planned by the staff. An evening open house exhibited children's work and in a total school assembly, children voted for the school's favorite book.

During the 1994-95 and 1995-96 school years, a literacy fair, designed both to celebrate children's literacy accomplishments and educate the community about Cherry Valley's approach to literacy instruction, was open to the public for a full day and evening. In the auditorium, visitors could see children engaged in a variety of literacy activities: SQUIRT (super quiet, uninterrupted, independent reading time), guided reading, journal writing, and writing with Kid Pix, a computer program which allows children to first write, using the keyboard, then illustrate using various tools including colored pencils and stamps. In addition, children have the option of adding an audio message to writing.

At the fair, a packet of materials, including a teacher created handout of reading strategies (see Appendix C) provided parents with practical suggestions to help their child with reading. The Cherry Valley Literacy News (see excerpts in Appendix D), also in the packet, is a collection of articles written by teachers, in which they discuss a number of topics, including Big Books, literacy in the preschool setting, process writing, and the role of phonics in the Cherry valley literacy curriculum. One article concludes:

> This approach to literacy instruction is not anti-skills. In fact, phonics and spelling are important strategies that are taught in context as part of a whole, exciting, meaningful and appropriate program for the child. Each child is an individual, progressing on this journey at their own rate. Together, parents and teachers can support and celebrate as our children grow in their own ability to read, write, and speak.

Starting Where the Learner Is

This passage expresses a central tenet of Cherry Valley's literacy program: *Teaching is tailored to the individual needs of each child.* The literacy model advocates that teachers start with the child, understanding his or her strengths and needs and matching the learner with appropriate resources. Relatively small class sizes (20 children in grades one through three and 24 in third grade) help teachers' efforts to individualize instruction. Community members who serve as "reading visitors," share enjoyable reading experiences with emergent readers, providing additional opportunities for children to read out loud to an adult or listen to a story in a supportive, interactive, one-on-one session.

In addition, a number of assessments help teachers make educational decisions, including literature logs of books read, individual reading conferences, running records (in which teachers keep track of what words children know and strategies used), tapes, and transcriptions or retelling of material read. Key to the assessment process is systematic observation of children engaged in authentic reading and writing activities. During ROVE time each day, teachers target two or three children to observe, recording their observations in monitoring notebooks. These observations provide information about children's learning styles, attitudes, strengths and needs. For example, one report reads "Stays with the text if not pushed. Limited fluent words, uses caps and periods appropriately."

Independent book tubs, containing books selected to match the children's reading level (as evidenced by their ability to read the words with 95 percent accuracy), provide each child a selection from which to choose for reading in class or to take home for reading with parents. The use of book bags, which all children, even the preschoolers, take home every day, is a strategy developed in New Zealand and used throughout their schools. Ironically, the strategy found its way into most American classrooms through New Zealand's Reading Recovery Program, an early intervention for first grade students who are having difficulty learning to read and write.

Reading Recovery offers an individualized program, whose focus is on fostering the child's development of a range of flexible strategies to be used independently when reading books or writing stories. The district has two certified Reading Recovery teachers and one in training who spend 30 minutes a day working with identified children on a one-to-one basis for 12-20 weeks. It has proven to be an effective program, with most children finishing the school year in the median of their class. Helpful to the success of this program is a classroom environment that supports the child's learning, using teaching methods similar to those used by Reading Recovery.

The Centralized Reading Resource plays a key role in efforts to individualize reading instruction. This library contains some 400 books that have been leveled in a continuum from emergent to early to fluent readers, who have a reading age of 12-14 years. Not only do teachers have a resource that they can draw on to meet the individual needs of all their students, but resource folders, that contain ideas on how other teacher have used that particular book, are kept with each book. According to Cherry Valley's World Wide Web site, "there may be an idea of how to innovate the book to make a class authored traveling book, ideas on art projects, or a photograph of a wall story that has been made using ideas from the book." Staff report that, "One of the major advantages of using a system like this is that, as budgets get smaller, we are able to pool our resources school wide and instead of having duplication of resources in each classroom, we now have books centralized for all to use."

School-Wide Curricular Change

Although Meeks describes the change process as necessarily slow, to an occasional visitor, the changes in practice are striking. Jane Braunger, a NWREL staff member and literacy specialist, who helped organize the 1992 Summer Literacy Institute, visited the school as part of the Equity in Early Literacy Project. In her case study of Cherry Valley she writes:

> Returning to the school in May, 1995 (after two years), I felt as if I had stepped into a life-sized pop-up book. "Wall stories," composed by different primary classes took me on a physical reading experience as they stretched down the hallway and around the corner. In some cases the stories, in children's own words, had been typed and enlarged through computer technology; in others, children's own handwriting carried the message. I

> recognized the influence of writers such as Joy Cowley and Eric Carle and enjoyed reading children's original versions of well-learned pattern books and rhyming stories. The stories wound up over classroom doorways decorated to announce the classroom's favorite book. (Each classroom determined its favorite by a vote). The colorful and inviting room doors beckoned me to come in to Charlotte's world (Charlotte's Web), Clifford's (Clifford, the Big Red Dog), or into the world of any number of appealing characters from children's literature (p. 9).

Doug Crosby's Classroom

One of the catalysts that has been instrumental in literacy program improvements has been the arrival in the 1994-95 school year of Doug Crosby, a native New Zealander, who is experienced as a primary teacher there. A Polson Chamber of Commerce Educator of the Year, Crosby has introduced many strategies that were pioneered in New Zealand, which has one of the highest literacy rates in the world.

There are a number of persistent myths about whole language. The basic premise of whole language is that, just as we learn language through participating in actual conversations, reading and writing are best learned through actually reading and writing. In part, because worksheets and basals are typically traded for enjoyable stories, whole language has been attacked by some as a "philosophy of osmosis" (Daniels, 1995), a method that is anti-phonics and lacking in academic rigor. A visit to Doug Crosby's classroom would quickly dispel all these myths.

Granted, Crosby's room bears little resemblance to the classrooms in which most adults were educated and where a majority of children still spend most of their primary school years. Currently dominating the room is a large tepee that provides a place to go "to read and write and get into another dimension." Blocks, legos, easels, and a rice table offer multiple opportunities for hands on learning and creating.

Books, hand puppets, stuffed animals, and examples of children's work are everywhere. Newly painted pictures hang from a clothesline that rings the room; whimsical clay figures wait to be taken by the visiting artist to be fired in a kiln. A colorful library of children's published books and letters from pen pals from New Hampshire are prominently displayed. For a substantial part of the day, children are curled up with books on the well worn, comfortable sofa and on braided rugs with soft pillows, reading individually and out loud with friends. Others are listening to tape recorded books at the listening center. Tables, rather than isolated desks, provide opportunities for cooperative learning. A writing center, complete with paper, pens, crayons, markers, paints, stamp sets, fancy cut scissors, and glitter, invites children to write and illustrate their stories.

The walls are filled with print. There are calendars, posters, graphs, paintings, and freezes. One large poster in the writing center describes the writing process:

Share and enjoy ⇒ Idea ⇒ Draft
⇑ Let's write ⇓
Publish ⇐ Closer look ⇐ Edit

Other posters reflect Cherry Valley's literacy philosophy. A quote from Frank Smith, Professor of Education at the University of Victoria reminds readers: "In reading, what the brain says to the eye matters more than what the eye says to the brain." Another proclaims:

> Literacy is not a 45 minute period of instruction
> With behavioral objectives and predictable outcomes.
>
> Literature is enjoying, learning, feeling,
> Being, sensing, laughing, crying,
> Hating, deciding, loving, growing,
> Sympathizing, listening.
>
> Literature is all day
> Being and becoming
> Growing and growing.

Developing competent readers and writers. One of the key features of successful reading comprehension instruction is a focus on the flexible application of authentic strategies. Spiegel (1995) explains:

> Skills are used in a reflexive manner whereas strategy usage involves conscious selection of an approach to solve a problem. Effective strategy utilization is metacognitive. The learner knows a problem exists, identifies the problem, and puts into effect a fix-up strategy to bypass or solve the problem. (p. 91).

Teachers at Cherry Valley encourage children to utilize a variety of strategies, including examining the letters to match print to sound (phonics), looking at the picture, skipping the word, reading ahead, and finding parts of the word that the reader already knows. Above all, children are encouraged to make sense of what they read. (In Appendix C is a handout, written by teachers, listing strategies for parents to use when a child experiences difficulty with a word). All of these strategies are evident in the shared reading situation described below:

In the hushed quiet of Doug Crosby's room, there is an air of expectancy. Children are sprawled on the braided rug and on the sofa, some holding stuffed animals and puppets. All eyes are on their teacher, who holds a Big Book and is ready to introduce it. Full page pastel pictures provide visual cues for the simple and predictable text, aiding children's attempts to match print to sound. Crosby begins: "The book we're reading is called *Along Comes Jake* by Joy Cowley. Remember when I'm reading out loud, you're reading up here (pointing to his own head). Listen carefully because I might have some trouble. Pointing to the words with a pointer, Crosby reads the first page, featuring a picture of children digging in a garden. "Ben helps Ann with the ____." Stopping here, Doug tells the group, "I think I need some help."

"Look at the first letter of the word," suggests Brittany.

"OK, it's a 'g' – that's a 'gu' sound. Is there anything else that can help me?"

"Look at the picture," offers Mark.

"Oh, is it this thing here?" asks Crosby, pointing at the spade and shovel. "Ann helps Dad with the digging."

"No," comes a chorus of voices.

"You're right, digging doesn't start with a 'g,'" agrees Crosby, "I guess I was looking at the picture. What's going to help me?" In response to a child's merely shouting out the word 'garden,' Crosby advises, "just telling me the word won't help me figure it out. OK, we looked at the first letter. What else can we do?" But you're right, when we look at the picture, it looks like a garden." After rereading aloud the sentence, "Ann helps Dad with the garden," Crosby asks, "Does that make sense?" The group agrees that it does. "Would it make sense if we said 'digging?' Yes, but it doesn't look right, does it? Digging starts with a 'd,' not a 'g.' And you're right Amy, there's an 'ing' on the end. We've talked about that before."

While most children are actively engaged in listening for their teachers' miscues and offering suggestions, two children are not paying attention. Crosby invites them to rejoin the group, "Come closer," he suggests quietly. Without missing a beat, he continues on to the next page, a picture of a bathroom with a bathtub full of bubble bath, and confidently reads the entire sentence, "Ben helps Mom with the bubbles."

While the children giggle and shake their heads, Crosby points to the last word again, saying, "That's a long word; I need some help. I looked at the picture and I saw bubbles but that doesn't look right. But there's a way to work it out. Today we're going to learn a new strategy. Sometimes a long word has another word inside it. If I cover up this part (room), I can see that there are actually two words. That's right, this word is 'bath.' Then if I cover it up, we have – yes, room. Now we put them together and we have 'bathroom.' So remember to look inside the big word and see if you can find the little ones."

And so goes the process of distinguishing bathroom from bubbles, digging from garden, clothes from washing, and chain saws from chopping. Although this type of instruction makes up only a small part of each day, all of the strategies children will need to become successful readers are introduced here. When reading more complex stories that have a developed story line, children are encouraged to reflect on the plot and the characters. Critical thinking is facilitated by such questions as "What do you think might happen? What's the problem people have in the story? What else do you know about this topic?"

Crosby is aware that "to some, my room may appear to be disorganized and occupied by a bunch of talkative kids." But years of teaching experience and critical reflection have shaped the philosophy that guides his teaching practices:

> I like to think of it as a self-motivated class of engaged learners. My basic teaching philosophies are rather simple, particularly when talking about the language arts field. I begin with the notion that all reading and writing must have a valid purpose. Then, I teach reading by getting the kids to read, and I teach writing by getting the kids to write. With that, you have my program.

An array of literacy activities. The school day is made up of an array of opportunities to engage in authentic and intrinsically motivating literacy activities. Each child has an individual plan (See Appendix E) that enables him or her to prioritize his or her activities each day, ensuring a balance of individual, buddy reading (reading with a friend), guided small group reading, listening to stories (with and without explicit instruction), modeled and draft writing, publishing, and conferencing with the teacher. In addition, every day children sign up on a voluntary basis to read to the class, a practice that the children, themselves, initiated.

Book bags filled with books chosen by the children go home every night for reading with parents. Parents are encouraged to use a range of flexible strategies to aid comprehension but, above all, the message to parents (highlighted in the Cherry Valley Literacy News) is, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading – is reading aloud to children….Just 15-20 minutes a day spent reading to our child will make the world of difference."

Multiple opportunities for writing, including letters to pen pals, family, and friends, writing stories and publishing books, journal writing, reports and science observations are provided. When writing first drafts, children are encouraged to use their "developmental spelling." Crosby prefers the term developmental to invented spelling, because, like learning to talk, learning to write and spell follow predictable developmental stages (see Appendix F for a more detailed account). Although spelling is primarily learned within the context of writing, the move to standard spelling is facilitated by concentrating on a few spelling words each week. The school targets 230 words, considered essential for spelling and writing, that all children are expected to know by third grade.

Teachers ensure individual relevance of the spelling words by targeting words from students' draft writing, words that children consistently make close approximations of, using their developmental spelling. Through a process of writing and studying the word, covering it and forming a mental image, writing it again and checking for accuracy, children become competent spellers without the drill that often accompanies mastering this skill. Today, Crosby calls the names of several children who are to receive spelling words. The enthusiasm that they express attests to the success of this method.

Crosby explains that although all children who entered this first grade class were at an emergent literacy level, currently, near the end of the school year, children's competence in literacy widely varies. By keeping a running record of children's reading, he is able to tailor learning to individual needs. In this way, Crosby observes, more academically competent children are challenged; children who may still be at the emergent stage of literacy can gain confidence and competence, by selecting from books at their reading level. In addition, children's own published books can be checked out and taken home. Modeled after books that were sent by their New Hampshire pen pals, these colorfully illustrated, computer written books include a publishing page, a title page with a dedication, the child's story, an "about the author" section, and a comment page for parents and visitors to use in responding to the book.

While many children write original stories, children who have difficulty coming up with their own ideas are encouraged to retell a traditional story, such as *Thumbelina*, or create an innovation of a familiar story. For example, one child had written *Red Deer, Red Deer*, a variation of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*. In addition to individually written books, children also create "traveling books," as a group, with each child contributing a page on a shared topic. Crosby compares a traditional worksheet to the traveling book:

> Think about a worksheet – it might take 10 or 15 minutes to fill out a worksheet and it will be thrown away or hung on the fridge. Take a traveling book. It might take an hour to make it. Each child might read it with their mom and dad for 10 minutes. It comes back to the classroom, becomes part of the classroom library and is read during the day and, at the end of the year, becomes part of the school library. How many hours of reading and enjoyment is that book giving to kids? (cited in Braunger, 1995).

Parents have expressed to Cherry Valley staff that they are pleased with the opportunity, not only to see their own child making progress, but to see all children develop into competent writers. Authors' parties, in which parents, grandparents and friends are invited to listen to children read their own individually written and illustrated books, provide multiple opportunities for children to share books with adults. Adults first listen to their own child read, make written comments in the comment section, and then move to another child. Thus, traveling books and authors' parties are some of the may ways that classrooms include families in Cherry Valley's caring community.

Floppy Rabbit's Journal provides additional opportunities for reading, writing, and nurturing. Each night Floppy (a stuffed bunny) goes home with a different child, with a reading bag that contains a draft writing book, a journal, and pencil and colored pencils, in tow. On the first page, "Welcome to Floppy Rabbit's Journal," it is explained to parents that, as "Floppy is not too good at writing yet," it is up to the person who takes Floppy home to write about Floppy's adventures at their house.

Children write first in their draft writing book, and then after a conference with parents to correct spelling and punctuation and to "help it make sense," the adventure is written into Floppy's journal, accompanied by a colored picture. In addition, parents are encouraged to write their own version of Floppy's stay, so children can see that their parents also like to write. Today Floppy has returned from Amanda's house and Amanda reads aloud her own story of Floppy's adventures on his overnight visit, including Floppy's new wardrobe, the yummy meal of pizza and carrots, and his difficulty finding her bedroom in her big house.

Summary. Researchers have identified a number of characteristics of successful reading comprehension programs, including ample time for text reading, direct strategy instruction, and collaboration and discussion (Fielding & Pearson, 1994). Cherry Valley's language arts program provides children with an enjoyable and intellectually challenging mixture of all of these approaches. But classrooms at Cherry Valley offer more than a successful reading comprehension program; the varied literacy activities provide multiple paths to meet the overall goal of their literacy program: "To ensure that all children become able readers, writers, speakers, and listeners, and are critical thinkers who can take responsibility for and direct their own lifetime of learning."

An Integrated Problem-Solving Approach to Learning.

While the focus of Cherry Valley's change efforts has remained on literacy, as Meeks commented, "Literacy transcends the language arts program; it is the whole learning context." Because of this broad conception of literacy and of developmentally appropriate practices, Cherry Valley has made changes in all areas of their curriculum and in their interactions with and services provided to families. Four broad school-wide themes, each lasting for a quarter of the school year, provide a framework for integrating the curriculum: self, family, and immediate community; diversity; imagination; and planet earth and beyond. Teachers plan projects and activities utilizing these themes throughout the year.

Rather than memorization of discrete facts, a problem solving approach is emphasized. For example, children utilize a hands on approach to math, including the use of Addison Wesely's *Box It and Bag It*. All children are encouraged to tie math to real world experiences so that, as Gail Gilchrist, a third grade teacher, put it, "it has meaning and integrity, giving children a sense of ownership – a sense of self." In Gilchrist's classroom, complete with a cozy reading corner, large posters of Einstein, with some of his famous quotes, are featured. These include "Imagination is more important than knowledge." "Do not worry about your difficulties with math. I can assure you that mine are greater."

Personal experience has made Gilchrist keenly aware of the importance of confidence in math learning. As a nursing student, she was told, "You can't become a registered nurse – you're not good at math." After eight quarters of math, starting with "bone-head math, " she proved this dire prediction wrong, but she also had decided on a new profession. As a student teacher, she made a promise to herself that she would find ways to find out how each child learns and to teach math in a way that made sense to every child, a promise that she has kept.

For example, children learn geometry by first developing concrete concepts by building shapes with pattern blocks, tracing the shapes, and cutting them out. In this process, they learn about congruency and angles, area, and perimeter. When appropriate, she ties their discoveries to an equation, but the original goal is for all children to examine these concepts in a variety of different ways, learn to see shapes in their world, to integrate math with art, and to develop a positive attitude toward math.

Skills learned in such a context are more easily remembered because they are understood, not merely memorized. Children's voices can be heard throughout the room, "Do you want to see my shape?" "I want to see if I can figure out how to do it again." They are also articulate about their appreciation of their teacher's approach. One student explained, "She doesn't just tell you what to do – if we don't understand, she always says, 'I'll help you.'" A friend agreed, "She teaches us until we get it. She always asks us if we understand."

In Dede McKethen's science class, children investigate the world around them through a variety of mediums. For example, they might read about clouds, draw or paint them, write a report, and write imaginative stories about them. Today children are actively involved in a group experiment about why some things float and others sink. Introducing the experiment with a request for the children to predict whether an orange will sink or float in water, McKethan then places the orange in a bucket of water. When they discover that an orange floats with the peel on but sinks without it, hypotheses are quickly formed: "We added water to the orange and it weighed too much." "It was heavy and it floated; we took the peel off and it sank." "There was a hole in the orange and things sink when there are holes." "The peel blocked the water from getting to the orange." "The water pushes the air up."

After recording all the predictions and hypotheses on chart pack, McKethan suggests, "Let's try something. Let's drop the peel in." After they all note that the peel floats, she asks, "What's special about the peel that makes it float?" When a student correctly observes that the air in the peel makes it float, McKethan agrees, placing the peel in the water and squeezing. "If you hold your breath and don't move, I think you'll see some bubbles." In the total quiet that ensues, the bubbles are the only audible sound. McKethan then asks the group another question, "What helps you float on Flathead Lake? That's right, an orange peel is like a life jacket that keeps you floating on the lake. Now you're ready to do some more investigating."

Armed with a bucket of water and assorted fruits, children excitedly work in groups of four for almost an hour, making predictions and venturing hypotheses regarding the sea worthiness of a green pepper, a lemon, a banana, and a pear, bringing their findings back to the larger group for discussion. Cooperative learning, problem solving, and responsibility to self and community are evident, as children fulfill their roles as recorder, presenter, materials person, and coach.

Skills *and* meaning. And what about skills? Do basic skills suffer when schools move to a more meaning-centered approach to teaching? Although standardized test scores did, in fact, decline for three years, while teachers worked on incorporating developmentally appropriate practices into their teaching repertoire, the 1995 Iowa Test of Basic Skills results showed Cherry Valley students consistently above both individual and school norms in reading, language, mathematics, and overall scores.

Because schools, unlike factories, cannot shut down and retool, Deborah Meier, former director of the highly successful Central Park East Schools, has characterized school reform as "driving while changing the tires." The worrisome decline in scores may have been partly due to the difficulty of learning new habits while unlearning old ones that have made teaching comfortable and predictable. As Braunger (1995) points out, "teachers learn to do things better with practice and support, too" (p. 15).

In addition, early childhood educators consistently argue that standardized tests, which measure a restricted view of intelligence, not only provide no useful information to improve instruction, but may be harmful to young children because they limit the breadth and depth of instruction, label and stigmatize some children, and are culturally biased. However, because these tests are still widely used as a measure of program accountability, the very positive results of the recent tests provide evidence that a meaning-based literacy program can produce impressive standardized test scores, even in schools that serve an economically and culturally diverse student body.

Meeting the Needs of All Children

Cherry Valley offers a range of activities and services to help all children be successful learners. A preschool serves children with special needs and a pre kindergarten classroom offers a transitional year for children with mild to moderate language delays. The transitional year has worked so well that "pull outs" have been minimal in kindergarten. Funded by Title 1 monies, an extended day kindergarten provides additional learning opportunities for children identified as language delayed and at risk for school failure. Utilizing the High Scope Curriculum, the program focuses on language and offers children a range of activities to choose from.

Multicultural awareness. Cherry Valley staff work hard to reduce cultural discontinuity for its Native American children and to enhance cultural awareness for all children and staff. Elders and artists from the neighboring Salish and Kootenai tribes assist with pow wows, dances, and artistic activities. In order to assure that books are unbiased, teachers use a book entitled, *How to Tell the Difference: A Checklist for Evaluating Children's Books for Anti-Indian Bias.* An Indian Reading Series, developed by Joe Coburn, highlights legends of the Northwest and art work by Native American artists, providing a framework for discussion, writing poetry, dramatic play and performances, puppet shows, and art work. In November and December, a school-wide multicultural festival is held. Each classroom picks a country and engages in in-depth study of the geography, language, values, food, dress, art, and music. Children visit each other's classrooms and the community is invited to a festival that includes tours of classrooms, an international tasting fair, and an international sing-a-long.

Noting that many Native American children are lacking in language experience, Debbie Hogenson, the Title 1 teacher, targets an average of 27 children, including 16 in the extended day kindergarten, for additional work with literacy development. In addition to traditional literacy approaches, she utilizes semantic mapping, similar to webbing, to help children understand what a story looks like visually (see Appendix G) Not only is the written word valued, but oral tradition is reinforced by inviting Native American elders and others from the community into the school to tell stories. Acting out a story, using costumes and props, is yet another way to develop competence in and enjoyment of literacy. Like all Cherry Valley instruction, these activities start where the child is, building on what children know, or, in Hogenson's words, "bringing *out* existing knowledge and bringing *in* new language."

Friday Clubs. One of the most popular additions to the Cherry Valley curriculum are the Friday Clubs. Working in mixed-age groups of 10 to 12, children choose from a wide list of possibilities, including sports, crafts, art, science, drama, dancing, nature, and Native American Culture clubs. Activities are structured to provide children with an opportunity to develop and enhance their multiple intelligences, creativity, skills, and awareness. For example in the Native American Culture Club, children examine their own biases and study Native American culture, utilizing the theme "Being Indian Is _____." According to staff, these activities offer opportunities for teachers to work with a wide range of ages, pursue and share a personal interest, enhance the development of a school-wide community, and last but not least, provide something to look forward to on Friday!

Dealing with feelings. Based on research on resiliency, which concluded that one of the key protective factors for resilient children is a caring relationship with a significant adult, Lori

Johnson, a child and family mentor, works with a number of children and their parents, fostering positive parenting and child behavior, utilizing ideas from such programs as STP (*Stop, Think, and Practice*) and *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen.* In addition, accompanied by her guitar, the "I Care Cat," and Felicia (a flower puppet with many faces), Jackie Farnsworth, the district school guidance counselor, visits classrooms and leads groups in discussions and songs that she has written about conflict resolution, safe touch, and dealing with anger.

In a kindergarten classroom, she tells the group who are gathered at circle, "Until the bad feelings go out, good things can't operate. What can you do to make the anger thing go down through your body and out through your feet?" A lively discussion ensues, punctuated by songs and stories told by Felicia and the "I Care Cat' about their lives and hard times. A few children who distract the group are gently reminded, " We really care about what Sara says, so we will listen." When a child launches into a quite involved story that shows no sign of ending, she suggests, "That might be something you want to put in a book." The short session ends with a group discussion about the "I Care" rules: listen, help, use kind words, share feelings, and be responsible for what we say and do.

Family, School, Community Partnerships

One of the cornerstones of DAP is a strong emphasis on viewing the child holistically, within the context of the family and community. In 1992, Meeks was invited to accompany the state superintendent of schools to a renowned family support program on a reservation in Arizona. Impressed with what they saw and with a committed and knowledgeable staff, all they needed to implement a similar program was funding. Fortunately, grant writing has become a competency for many school administrators and Cherry Valley has been successful at procuring funds from a variety of sources, including the Montana Board of Crime Control, and, most recently, the Meyer Memorial Trust. Key to this success is evaluation; according to Meeks, they evaluate everything. Teachers, parents, and children are included in the evaluation process of determining what works, what doesn't and how to improve it.

In 1992, the Polson Partnership Project, an early intervention school-based support program for families, was formed. Designed to "ensure that all children have a positive, successful school experience and to link families with needed services," the project contracts with Co Carew, a licensed clinical social worker who serves as the program director. A Native American, Carew works half time providing referral to families for needed services, individual and family counseling, teacher consultations and professional development, and provides information about Native Americans, including an historical perspective.

The five components – a family resource center, teacher collaboration, student services, a home resource specialist, and cultural enrichment – provide a comprehensive approach to family support. Lori Johnson, the child and family mentor, serves as the home resource specialist, making home visits and providing parenting education. Cherry Valley's school change philosophy of building trust and utilizing teamwork has ensured that the program's emphasis is always on building relationships and is supportive, never investigative. Johnson has engaged in such diverse activities as taking a child to a dentist, creating charts to help parents get children to bed on time, and organizing field trips for parents and children.

One of the most successful strategies for building trust and including parents in the school community is "family fun nights." Like most schools, Cherry Valley teachers found that, while there is no trick to attracting white middle-class parents to school events, other families may be disinclined to come to school, due to a variety of reasons, including lack of time, their own negative experiences in school, and cultural incongruity. Understanding these barriers, Joyce Crosby, the Family Enrichment Coordinator, has organized non-threatening and enjoyable activities that have lured even the most reluctant parents to visit the school.

These activity nights, which offer an opportunity for the whole family to participate, are averaging a 70 percent turnout. While some activities target one or two classes, some are school-wide. During one week, over three nights, a total of 276 parents and grandparents of kindergarten children made play dough (the *cooked* kind, no less) together with their children. These informal evenings are not only a perfect setting for parents to get to know each other and school staff but offer opportunities for teachers to talk about how family members can participate in their children's education. Doug Crosby explains:

> In this country, we often read for extrinsic rewards, like pizza. It's the American way. What we need is intrinsic motivation, meaning sharing. We work very hard to get families involved in literacy activities with their children -- not focusing on a particular set of words but establishing a habit that keeps going. Younger siblings see their older brothers and sisters reading with their parents. They see the enjoyment and they want to read too. Often younger siblings of children in Reading Recovery don't qualify for this program because of this early involvement with reading.

Teachers attend these occasions and develop their own family involvement activities, typically tied to literacy. For example, when Dawn Hoffman's second grade class read the *Three Little Pigs*, each family made a pig house with their child. Children were photographed with their house, and the photographs were placed in a book, which included children's writings about their house. The project was a big hit with parents and children. A typical parent comment was, "I really enjoyed doing something with my child besides watching TV." An example of one of these fanciful constructions is in Appendix H.

On-Going Staff Development

Dialogue, collaboration, observation, practice, and reflection are the key ingredients to the inquiry-based model of professional development used at Cherry Valley. A weekly early release provides time for collaboration and grade level planning. Teachers share expertise and support through peer coaching, discussion, and inservices within the school and Title 6 monies provide release time, enabling teachers to observe in neighboring schools.

An emphasis on teamwork and creating a community of learners has led to a very changed job description of teaching assistants (provided by Title 9 funding) for Native American children.

While teaching assistants were formerly utilized as clerical help and spent little time interacting with children, the new conception of the assistants' role was written by a Native American parent to focus on supporting children in the classroom. By taking responsibility for selected children, rather than being tied to a particular classroom, teaching assistants act as mentors who support children socially and academically, with a strong emphasis on (of course) literacy. Staff development activities, including Andrea Butler videos, have enabled teaching assistants to assume more responsibility, leading to more job satisfaction and commitment.

This year, a study group will meet monthly to discuss practical applications of assessment alternatives. Workshops on "meeting the needs of special children in the classroom" and "developing a culturally sensitive learning environment" are also planned. The SWAT Team (School-Wide Assistance Team) provides teacher to teacher support. Staff meet and discuss issues, such as children having difficulties, and brainstorm ways to support their learning. All of these activities help staff work together to develop a secure environment that encourages experimentation, risk taking, and most importantly, to support children and families.

This fall, for the second year, Polson School District is sponsoring "Literacy Learning in the Classroom," presented by Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc. In this four-day institute, "teachers are offered a model that serves as a guide for organizing the reading program, scheduling a language arts block, and for the decision-making that teachers engage in on a daily basis." Central to the approach is "understanding the learner's strengths and needs, with the goal of helping students become competent and enthusiastic life-long learners." Last summer's institute, which was attended by over 200 educators from the Northwest and from as far away as New York and Florida, was rated as the most valuable staff development many had ever attended.

The Mission Valley Consortium. Recently, Polson has formed a partnership with two neighboring school districts in order to provide "ongoing professional development that is an integral characteristic of schools as communities of learners" (Mission Valley Consortium, 1995, 96). Coordinated by Kay Sagmiller, the consortium is based on the premise that "conversation, reflection, and continuous improvement" are essential for effective staff development. The consortium offers staff development opportunities that "provide a common direction, yet allow individual building staffs to design professional development plans unique to their own needs and interests" (Mission Valley Consortium).

Through opportunities to learn about practices in each others' schools and classrooms and to engage in critical inquiry together, the partnership has done much to break down barriers between the schools and to provide continuity for children as they transition to other schools in the district. A teacher explained, "We didn't even speak the same language at first. It took a year to develop shared meanings."

Parents are invited to participate in individual schools and with the Consortium at large. Study groups, workshops, and courses for credit sponsored by the Consortium have included the following areas of study: Assessment; Children and Society; Cognition; Cooperative Learning; Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum; Inclusion; Integration of Curriculum; Renewal and Leadership; Teaching and Learning; and Technology. In addition, study groups, made up of representatives from each school, have reviewed and developed a social studies curriculum, which is sensitive to their bi-cultural community, and a technology team has developed a five year plan for the three schools. The World Wide Web page asserts:

> Most importantly, we believe we are making a difference for our children. Meaningful and thoughtful change occurs over time through sustained effort; at times a good nudge helps too. Our consortium acts as a "positive persistent disturbance" in the process of change. Despite the many challenges of improving school, we are seeing our faculties move toward a more constructivist approach to teaching and authentic forms of assessing learning. Without a doubt, all of us have increased our conversation about curriculum, learning, and children, and we believe that it is through this increased conversation and collaboration that significant and sustaining change will occur.

Conclusion

At Cherry Valley, staff, parents, and children work together to build an inclusive learning community inside and outside of school. To a visitor, the results – a positive atmosphere, in which everyone learns together -- look almost effortless. However, a number of very concrete steps have been taken to create this sense of community. The use of inquiry as the primary model for staff development has helped to create a sense of ownership by teachers of their teaching practices. Knowing that collaborative inquiry can only thrive in a climate of mutual respect, interdependence, and trust, staff at Cherry Valley have focused on the strengths of staff, children, and parents. "Starting where the learner is" applies not only to children but to adults, as well. A shared sense of responsibility for children includes an emphasis on children's "responsibility to self and community" (philosophy statement, Appendix A).

The focus on teamwork and cooperation and the formation of the original literacy leadership team proved to be a strong catalyst for school-wide change. By including everyone in the process of developing a shared educational philosophy and in the writing of the literacy guidelines, staff were able to come to consensus about teaching practices, while, at the same time, respecting individual differences. The Mission Valley Consortium has helped staff continue and expand collaboration and dialogue with colleagues both inside and outside the school.

An emphasis on viewing the child holistically, within the context of the family and community, combined with a philosophy of building partnerships with families, has enhanced family participation in learning activities and helped establish reciprocally supportive relationships. While not all families agree with all of Cherry Valley's educational practices, including parents in decisionmaking and school-wide activities helps break down barriers. The philosophy of including -- rather than marginalizing -- parents who have concerns ensures that conflict is dealt with in a positive way.

For example, Crosby reports that on the first day of school, reading books were sent home with each child and parents were asked to make positive comments about their children's reading in the back of the book. Although most comments were positive, one parent, who preferred a more traditional approach to literacy, commented, "I don't like this way of teaching reading." Crosby intends to invite this parent into the classroom to observe the language arts activities. "Hopefully, she will see that children are learning and getting things done." Meeks concurs, "We have to communicate with parents. Our approach is not a rejection of the basics. We take current knowledge of learning theory and find better ways to teach and learn. We need to have the ability to articulate what we're doing."

Maintaining a school-wide sense of community may look effortless, but it requires on-going dialogue, reflection, and collaboration. Meeks points out:

> It requires constant monitoring of the match between what we say we believe and what we actually do. If we really believe it is the children's school, then we must keep their needs at the center. We can say we believe anything but what we do better illuminate what we believe. We have to keep taking it back to our philosophy – keep that out in front of us. This is key.

This year, a number of events will challenge Cherry Valley's staff to maintain the close personal relationships that have fostered their positive school climate. The addition of three fourth grade classrooms in order to serve half of the fourth graders in the district (as well as an increase in overall enrollment) has resulted in an increase in the number of children from 330 to 400 children. As schools get larger, face-to-face interactions and dialogue are harder to arrange, reaching consensus on school-wide decisions more cumbersome, and, as principals must spend more time on administration, personal connections between principal and children are harder to build and maintain.

Meeks, who loves to visit all classes within the first two days of school, serving as teacher, reader of stories, and role model, finds that this timetable is no longer realistic. Combined with her additional duties as the special education director in the district, Meeks finds that her "role is increasingly defined by the largeness of the school." Finding ways to foster the sense of community built up over the years will be challenging. (Appendix I contains a portrait of Meeks in her multiple roles).

In addition, like many schools, Cherry Valley is facing a possible restriction/reduction in revenue, due to a changing tax base and no increases in state education funding, at a time when the needs of children and families are increasingly complex. Although the effects of the recent welfare reform bill have not been felt, staff anticipate that they will need to increase their efforts to meet the needs of children and families. Keeping the view that children are part of a family will be even more important as they work to meet children and families' needs for support and community connection.

Despite these challenges and uncertainties, Meeks reports that morale at Cherry Valley is good. This year, more than ever, Cherry Valley is improving their school program through grants. The Mission Valley Consortium received a two year Goals 200 technology grant that will finance an upgrade of technology in all district school, including Cherry Valley. A Goals 2000 grant, written collaboratively with Bozeman and Missoula, will allow Cherry Valley to continue the work of the Polson Partnership Project for two more years. The grant also provides some funding for Cherry Valley to provide technical assistance to nearby Linderman School to help them develop a school-based family support program.

Finally, Cherry Valley received a Department of Education grant in collaboration with the University of Montana and the Salish and Kootenai tribes. Cherry Valley will be a model demonstration site for a project titled: "Building Language and Literacy Skills During the Early Childhood Years: Preparing Children with Disabilities for Success in Early Elementary School." Fully funded for five years, the grant will provide monies to enhance the literacy skills of children, preschool through second grade, who are identified as having special needs or as "at-risk." In keeping with a family-centered approach, the child and family mentor through the Polson Partnership Project will work as a family literacy specialist, strengthening family literacy activities. Cherry Valley's positive, "we can make it work" attitude appears to be up to the new challenges.

HELEN BALLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CAMAS, WASHINGTON

> Do not underestimate your power as an educator. Your power to make all of your students feel included, and perhaps, most importantly, your power to plant hope (Wu, 1992).

> For the last several years, Jake, according to his father, has been a difficult child, impulsive, quick to anger, and the word "active" does not begin to describe his behavior. When he was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyper Activity Disorder (ADHD) at age five, it was almost a relief. But the medication hasn't been the magic pill his parents had hoped and they worry about side effects. His teacher is understanding but even she is losing patience with his disruptive behavior.
>
> Every morning it's the same scene at the Farber house. "I don't want to go to school," wails Joey. "Don't make me go." And every morning Joey's mother brings her always tearful, sometimes angry seven-year-old to his classroom and runs from the room, her feelings of anger, sadness, and confusion mirroring those of her son.
>
> Trudy's first grade teacher is worried about her. Always a shy child, lately she has been so withdrawn that she has hardly spoken. Increasingly, she spends her time curled up in the large stuffed chair in the reading center, sucking her thumb. Although school staff haven't seen any bruises, they are more and more convinced that Trudy is being abused.

Every day, scenerios like those described above are being played out in families and classrooms across America. The way that teachers and school staff deal with problems such as these will have a profound influence on children's success in school and beyond.

The Comfort Corner

At Helen Baller Elementary School, the Comfort Corner, part of the Primary Intervention Program (PIP), provides a safe, supportive place for children like Joey, Trudy, and Jake to "get a healthy start in school by helping to build friendship skills, communication skills, and self-esteem." Funded by a state grant, the PIP has been in operation since 1990 and serves children who may be experiencing difficulty in classroom, playground, or home situations. Children are selected on the recommendation of parents, teachers, and other staff members.

Parents, in particular, are an important part of the program, sharing their views about their children and helping to set goals for their children's growth, as well as benefiting from both formal and informal parenting education. "We try hard to honor all parent requests. No one knows the kids like parents do," explains Child Development Assistant (CDA) Kathy Duley who has served as "a special friend and supportive listener" to approximately 300 of Helen Baller's children since the program began.

According to a brochure about the program, the CDA offers children assistance in a variety of ways, including: "providing a committed, accepting human relationship, encouragement of appropriate expression of feelings, assistance in developing coping behaviors, providing structure/limits within a caring relationship, providing an escape from stress of school and peer worries, and advocacy for the child, (helps others to see him/her as a lovable child)."

How does Duley, whose excitement about her job is contagious, accomplish all this? "They think they just come in and play," she smiles. Which isn't surprising -- in the comfort corner, for about forty minutes every week, children sing, dance, read stories, draw and paint pictures, watch videos, make snacks for guests, play with puppets, write letters, play games, and talk. No wonder children frequently ask her, "What do I have to do to get in your room?"

Although the comfort corner is a tiny office space adjacent to the music room, it is filled with children's art and equipped with bright blue child-size sofas and chairs, stuffed animals, puppets, overflowing book shelves, a tape player, and a small space for dancing -- all the things a child might need to feel at home. During the first weeks of school, activities center around building trust and self-esteem: "Kids won't open up if they're not confident. I let them know from the get-go that, with the exception of abuse, what they say is between them and me." Duley uses a variety of tools to open up conversation. "Initially, I introduce the speaking ball that we use when it's our turn to share and I tell them a little about myself and my family -- my husband, our cat, my three children and my seven grandchildren."

While part of the time is spent working on social skills and basic life skills, such as what to wear in the snow or how to make and serve a snack to a friend, it is feelings that have center stage in the comfort corner. A feelings chart helps children recognize and talk about their feelings, but of course children don't just talk, they also sing, read about, act out, and paint their feelings. Duley might ask them to draw a picture of how they feel today or a time when they felt sad, angry, or happy. Or after watching a video of *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, Duley asks, "What was the worst day you ever had?" Then they talk about and illustrate it.

Music helps lighten the tone and circle time is used for singing, dancing, and affection. Even for children who are not comfortable with hugging, circle hugs -- a hand squeeze acknowledged with an "I got it," and "sent" to the next circle partner -- helps everyone feel included and valued. In "follow-the-leader" everyone in circle matches the leader's expression. "A lot of children think it's not OK to be angry," explains Duley," so I tell them, "Show me how to look angry. Let it shine!"

Book shelves spill over with stories about bad dreams, bad days, divorce, and every imaginable kind of feeling. *On the Day You Were Born* and *I'll Love You Forever* are favorites. "Many children hear, 'If it weren't for you things would be better, I wouldn't have to work so hard, we'd have more money,' notes Duley, "and these stories help them imagine a happier family."

Imagining is something they do a lot. Duley invites children to "Imagine a perfect day," or asks"What would you do if you were president?" And many of the answers belie the playful nature of the activities and the idea of carefree childhood: "On my perfect day, I would go out and work and surprise my mom with a whole bunch of groceries." "If I were president, I would give everyone a dollar and then they would have money." "I would make abuse against the law and then my dad wouldn't hit my mom." "I'd bring back to life the person my father murdered so then my dad wouldn't be in jail anymore."

A worry box provides a tangible way to relieve anxiety. Children write down their most pressing worry and talk about it with the group – what they can do about it, how they feel about it. Then when they are ready to get rid of it, they put it in the box. But they know it's OK to say on another day, "I have that worry again," and they can start the process all over again. "The worry box gives children permission not to worry. When they are worried about Dad going to jail, not enough money to pay the rent, or parents fighting, learning is the last thing on their mind," notes Duley. "I always have a plan for the day but the kids set the mood. If they have something pressing to discuss, we always work on that first."

Every year, there are from one to three children who are "school phobic," children who are extremely anxious and even physically sick at the thought of school. Depending on the severity of the problem, Duley might ride the bus with them, meet them at the door, let them spend the first few minutes of the day in the comfort corner, and/or let them use as many as three tickets a day for time in the comfort corner during the school day. By the end of the year, these children need less time with Duley and when they are in the comfort corner, they are usually helping her. Duley believes that helping children to understand that, "Everyone has fears about something and it's OK to feel afraid" is the first step in overcoming the fear. In fact, feeling OK about feelings is a central message at the comfort corner.

It's OK to Be Mad But It's *Not* OK to Be Mean

"It has basically been a life-saver for us. I wish all kids could have this program," explains Ms. Sorenson, mother of Max, a successful graduate of the PIP Program:

> Although our son was diagnosed with ADHD before kindergarten, we wanted to work on our parenting skills, rather than using medication. But when Max entered school, I visualized a free parking place right in front of the principal's office -- I knew I would wear a path between home and school because of his behavior and quick temper.
>
> But in the comfort corner with Kathy, he has learned to talk about and express his feelings in an acceptable way. Now he tells me, "Mom you really made me angry when you wouldn't let me wear my red shirt with my blue pants." Or he tells his dad, "Dad, you can take me to the park at 8:30; that's what they have street lights for." Then we can talk about it and work out a solution. Before he would just blow up.
>
> His communication skills have really improved. He doesn't need to be reminded to use them. When a Portland Trailblazer player punched a fan, he told us, "I should send him my sign that says, 'It's OK to be mad but it's not OK to be mean.' He could put it in his living room like I do. Then he wouldn't have to punch people.

Her son Max agrees with his mother's assessment. An unusually mature, articulate child of seven, Max appears at ease as he recounts his first experiences in the comfort corner:

> At first, I was kind of shy. But then I got to know Kathy and felt comfortable. We talked a lot about feelings so I didn't feel sad and mad all the time. If I have a problem, I don't say, 'I don't want to talk about it' like I used to. I can talk about how I feel – angry, sad , down, left out.
>
> And sometimes I don't feel like talking. Sometimes I just handle it myself. I go in my room and put up a sign that says, 'Don't come in.' Then I climb up on my bunk bed and hang on the bars and think of something to do. I know that it's OK to feel mad and sad. Some people laugh when people cry, but you don't have to be shy about crying. It's OK to cry; some kids don't know that. And that's OK too.

After participating in the program for two years, Max and his parents are confident that he can be successful in any of Helen Baller's classrooms. In fact, he is doing so well in his current classroom that his teacher expressed surprise that he had ever needed the extra support provided by the PIP. Although Max encounters a number of challenges both on the playground and in the classroom, he is now able to reflect on a situation and evaluate his own responsibility in creating and solving it:

> Sometimes kids on the playground like to start a fight. I try to handle it myself by telling them no; but if they punch me, I tell a teacher. I think it started when I brought my karate trophies to sharing time in the first grade. I got a reputation as a tough guy. Some kids don't know how to stand up for themselves and they keep asking me to beat up other kids for them. Boy, do I wish I had never brought those karate trophies to school!

Although his new skills and positive attitude work well with teachers, fellow students, and parents, Max says that sibling squabbles are less amenable to change. "When my big sister is being mean, it's not a good time to talk to her. I wait 'til she cools down. Besides," confessed Max "I tease her a lot. I've been annoying her for years."

But Max is enthusiastic about the program and explains that he learned a lot and enjoyed himself too. "My favorite part was making pictures and when we wrote the president. We got to write about what we would do if we were president. I said I would stop nuclear wars, I mean nuclear activities. I'm not so worried about wars any more, but there are *way* too many wars going on – it's really starting to get stupid." Max also loved the many stories they read and discussed. His favorite story, *The Great Blueness*, is "about a kid who was feeling left out and wouldn't talk to anyone. I learned a lot from that book. I try to learn everything I can about what I see, do, and hear. I may be a scientist when I grow up."

The response to the PIP – from parents, children, and staff -- has been overwhelmingly positive (see Appendix A). The program plays a pivotal role in helping children like Max, whose parents have the skills, resources, and motivation to provide needed support, to meet all the goals of the program: developing communication skills, problem solving skills, coping skills, learning to play cooperatively, improving self-esteem, building an interest in making new friends, and bringing out individual strengths. But, despite the additional services of a half-time counselor for children with serious difficulties, not all children fare so well, notes Duley:

> We work with kids who probably aren't going to make it; they will drop out, end up in trouble – become abusers or abused. You just hope you can give them enough tools so they can beat the odds, something that connects that will help them have the determination to change things. But some will never change because they live it all day every day. All schools can do is give them a safe place to come for six hours a day.

But, combined with a supportive school climate, the PIP is able to bring about, in the words of Superintendent Milt Dennison, "a positive turnaround in the lives" of many students and their families. Although most children spend only one or two years in the program, the relationships formed there are enduring. "All my kids are special," says Duley, "they can come see me any time. Our relationship doesn't end when they leave."

Highlight My Strengths

Research on resiliency has shown that an active, problem-solving approach is characterized by a sense of self-esteem and a belief in one's power to shape and have an effect on his or her experience (Rutter, 1985). "A primary goal of education at Helen Baller," explains principal Pat Edwards, "is to allow children to explore and problem-solve; we want to make children aware that they have something to say about what happens, that they can make a choice and that their choices *do* matter."

One of the key resources for the literacy curriculum, a book called *Highlight My Strengths* by Leanna Traill, quotes a Maori saying, "Highlight my strengths, and my weaknesses will disappear." To convey that message, the entire staff works together to support children and their families. "Education," as a poster in the hall announces, "takes everyone." Principal Pat Edwards is more frequently seen in the cafeteria, serving breakfast or lunch, or teaching in the classroom than in her office. "It's selfish, really," says Edwards, a 30-year veteran educator. "I love to teach and being in the classrooms validates that I *can* still teach and model good teaching. The kids say, 'Wow, Ms. Edwards, you're a teacher.' And it gives me credibility – I'm not asking anyone to do something I can't do."

Edwards' teaching serves another purpose – to enable staff to visit each others' classrooms to observe and learn from each others' teaching. Edwards continues:

> There's lots of sharing of expertise, lots of collegiality here. You won't hear, 'you're on my turf.' Instead of individual ownership, the feeling is 'we're her for kids and we can all look good together.' Teachers are self-assured and feel good about themselves and their teaching. It has taken lots of hours to get here and we have to work to maintain it. When we hire new teachers, we do it as a team because they will need to fit into a team.

This year, there will be eight new teachers due to a change in the structure of Helen Baller. Originally started as an early childhood center eight years ago, this year marks the first year that Helen Baller is an elementary school, serving pre-school through fourth grade. Although there is still a developmental preschool on site, the preschool for children with special needs is now off site, third and fourth grade classes have been added, and seven of Helen Baller's teachers have moved to other schools. "It's purely a physical plant decision; we just grew too big for the building" says Edwards. "We really believe that as an early childhood center, we made a difference for kids. We know that early intervention is the best thing, not remediation. We prefer to identify areas to work on and push now, rather than try to fix it later on."

Helen Baller's philosophy of focusing on strengths and teamwork will guide this year's project which will focus on developing a school-wide discipline policy and manual which will be agreed on through consensus building activities by the entire school staff. Through a Education Service District (ESD) grant, seven staff members, including Edwards, Duly (from PIP), a parent, and regular and special education teachers, will receive training from ESD and will meet periodically with other schools to discuss successes and failures. These core team members will then provide training for other staff. The project goals include creating a positive school climate and behavior plans, better preparing school staff to work with social, emotional, and behavior problems, and creating a network between schools and with parents and the community for support of a positive school discipline plan.

The project will not only help staff address children's emotional and behavior problems, but it will provide opportunities for the eight new teachers to be integrated into Helen Baller's community. Edwards reports that although "staff are sad to see the breakup of our cohesive group, we are hopeful that our philosophy will be transferred to other schools through our teachers." In addition, the other elementary schools will "get to see what kids look like at entry." Because until this year, Helen Baller has served all the kindergarten children in the district and because children older than eight left Helen Baller to go to other schools, staff sometimes heard remarks such as, "You just have little kids there and with developmentally appropriate practices, all you do is play."

In fact, the school goal of "creating an educational environment where developmental stages are the cornerstone of the program" places a strong emphasis on the role of play in learning. A poem displayed in the hallway entitled *Poet's Corner*, (see Appendix B) by Anita Wooley, speaks of the virtues of play:

> When I'm building in the block room,
> Please don't say I'm "Just Playing."
> For, you see, I'm learning as I play
> About balance and shapes.
> Who knows, I may be an architect someday.
>
> When I'm getting all dressed up,
> Setting the table, caring for the babies,
> Don't get the idea I'm "Just Playing."
> For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
> I may be a mother or father someday. . .
>
> When you ask me what I've done at school today, and I say, "I Just Played,"
> Please don't misunderstand me.
> For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
> I'm learning to enjoy and be successful in my work.
> I'm preparing for tomorrow.

Today I am a child and my work is play.

But, like most early childhood educators, staff at Helen Baller take pains to explain that children are "not just left to play." Their educational philosophy and practices are the result of eight years of study, practice, and reflection.

Developing a Balanced Curriculum

In the beginning, staff engaged in a year-long study of research and visited early childhood programs in the state. Open board meetings provided opportunities for information to be shared and discussed with parents, teachers, board members, and interested community members. The program they came up with included: Before and after school child care, a mixture of graded and multiage classrooms, full inclusion of children with special needs in kindergarten through second grade (aided by dual certification of six teachers in both basic and special education), preschools for typically developing children, as well as for those with special needs, early prevention screening (*Early Prevention of School Failure, see Appendix C*) for all incoming kindergarten children, and an emphasis on meeting the needs of the whole child through family involvement and through attention to gross motor development (including music and movement), as well as an academic curriculum.

Over the years, teachers at Helen Baller have come up with many informal activities to entice families to school. There are ice cream socials, open houses, special lunches, and drop-in bar-b-ques. And who could resist Jelly Bean Field Day, when children and their families rotate through activities, such as hula hoops, golf, jump rope, and bubbles, with a jelly bean reward for completing each activity. Or Scooter Town, where children set up a cooperative town, complete with post office, fire station, stores, houses, and of course, where scooter boards substitute for cars and buses. Or the Helen Baller Jungle, where children show off their tumbling and gymnastic skills, amidst stuffed animals -- monkeys, lions, tigers, and gaudy parrots -- and hand-made jungle flora.

Each year, staff present either DEAR Night, which focuses on the importance of literacy and reading to children, or SMILE Night (Science and Math Invoking Learning and Exploration), which focuses on using problem-solving techniques that children have learned in their classrooms. Children guide their parents through 13 interest areas set up by teachers, including sound, light, geology, and water.

"Literacy is the main thrust," Edwards explains. "Everything revolves around it; without it, children can't do math, they can't function." Over the years, the entire staff, including both classified and certified, have engaged in reading, reflecting, and practicing strategies learned from Regie Routman's *Invitations*, Leanna Traill's *Highlight My Strengths*, and a number of books from the New Zealand Ministry of Education, including *Dancing with the Pen* and *Reading in the Junior Classes*.

A district early release time each Wednesday provides needed time to introduce and discuss new research and literature. Staff have also benefited from videos and presentations on numerous literacy strategies developed in New Zealand and which are increasingly finding their way into

American classrooms. In order to provide individualized reading instruction, staff have leveled books and created a Centralized Reading Resource that is available to all teachers. Edwards and a number of teachers have visited New Zealand for an intensive study of their literacy program and have shared their expertise with the entire staff. In addition, a representative from the *Wright Group* has demonstrated shared and guided reading and writing.

Although *Reading Recovery* is considered too costly, many of the strategies used in this program have been integrated into the regular program. In particular, the emphasis on helping children develop a range of flexible strategies, rather than memorizing isolated rules, is key to their reading program. Running records have proved to be an invaluable tool to evaluate children's reading level, to identify strategies that emergent readers' are using, and to help them learn new ones, including, but not restricted, to phonics. *The Six Writing Traits* -- ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions -- developed by Vickie Spandel are used to evaluate third grade writing. But staff at Helen Baller are quick to point out that children in their classes "don't just learn to read -- they read to learn." A poster in the hallway proclaiming "Ten ways to become a better reader – read, read read, read, read, read, read, read, read, read" is put into practice throughout the school

Alona Dickerson's Classroom. In Dickerson's second grade classroom, children read in the inviting reading nook on benches covered with blue calico to match the curtains, sprawled on the circle rug, individually and with friends, in a teepee, and even in a plastic bathtub filled with pillows. Children read songs and poems they have memorized, read the print-filled walls, choose books from their own learning logs (in which they write their own stories), and from the "browsing box," which includes a favorite book, an "I can read book," and a new book. Literacy enhanced play centers – puzzles, games, listening center, computers, poems, play dough – allow children to "find their comfort level before branching out to other forms of literacy." Dickerson explains:

> This way, with so many choices, children can be successful right off the bat. We don't just give them a worksheet and if they can't do it, they just sit there or disrupt the class. When we just used basals, they could only read the basals; it didn't transfer to other books. Now they never say, 'I can't read, I can't write.' At whatever level they are, they can do it. They feel like they're free but really we've set it up so they can be successful. The freedom empowers them to be learners and it has almost eliminated discipline problems.

Many reading strategies are learned through poems that they sing as a group, while Dickerson or children point to the words. Because they know the words, it is easy for children to "read" them and to find them in other contexts. "Learning phonics, punctuation, and spelling rules through songs helps children see connections everywhere," explains Dickerson, who is an enthusiastic spokesperson for the philosophy and practices she learned in her visit to New Zealand and from subsequent study.

> Children say, 'Look, I see a "c" followed by an "e."' They begin to see patterns. We catch them in different ways; we catch them with music, with the visual arts, everyone learns differently. And singing also builds community. Every week, an illustrated poem book goes home and parents are included in the community through sharing the poem with their children.

Cooperative learning capitalizes on children's strengths; by pairing children with different abilities, children learn from each other. Journal writing is used to build fluency with writing and as a means of evaluating progress and establishing individual goals. Although some children can write only a sentence or two, while others are writing paragraphs, all can successfully meet their goals and enjoy an individual conference with their principal, where they show off their new skills.

Classrooms are set up to provide children with the tools they need to be successful writers, without depending on their teacher for all instruction. Word cards with common words Velcroed to the wall, poems and songs on chart pack, dictionaries of varying sizes, "banks" of "juicy" words (adjectives), and walls filled with print -- charts, posters, and children's work -- provide multiple ways for children to learn to spell. Today, children are writing in their journals, talking quietly to each other and occasionally reading their stories out loud. "How do you spell caterpillar?" asks Rosalie. And the answers come quickly. "Look in your pocket dictionary." "Look on the word cards." "Ask Jeanette." But Rosalie thinks of a quicker way to spell the word and she heads for the insect chart.

By providing a large array of available resources for spelling and encouraging children to use developmental or "functional" spelling, children are free to concentrate on the content of their writing. Before it was time for lunch, Nathan was well on his way to answering the age-old question of why cats kill mice and had solved the riddle of why dogs chase cats:

> Chapter 1 Why do dogs chas CATS?
> Once apan a time in a far away land thar was a yung cat and Tow kitins. One day a dog came. But in this land dogs don't chas cats thaey like cats. And the dog saw the kitins and wanted to play with them so he askt the yung cat. And He said NO! so the dog got mad and foght. So for now on thay set a egsampel for ether dogs.

At the end of journal writing time, children are anxious to share their journals with the class as a group and although there is not enough time for everyone (every day) to share their stories individually, children happily retire to a comfortable spot to read their entries with a friend. Dickerson does not lament the loss of her role as "dispenser of information."

> At the end of the day I don't say, 'My lecture was great, I did a great job today.' I say, 'The kids did a really good job today' and they leave saying it to themselves. It takes a lot of time to set up but the rewards are worth it. When we were using only basals, only six children in my first grade classroom reached the level of *Beth's Bear Hug*, a book at second grade proficiency. Last year, only six of 26 first graders *didn't* make it *all the way through* the book.

Central to the curriculum at Helen Baller is an emphasis on helping children recognize, understand and articulate their thoughts and feelings. Self reflection is as crucial in the classroom as it is in the comfort corner. In Janice Heigl's kindergarten classroom, metacognition – being aware of how one goes about one's thinking and learning – is considered as important as being aware of the subject matter children are studying.

Janice Heigl's Kindergarten Classroom. "We try to create an atmosphere that helps children feel free to take risks," says Heigl. "In math, especially, kids think they don't know. We encourage them to think and give their best thought. We work hard at getting them to articulate their thinking and we share the different thinking, not just one right answer." Today, a math problem emerges from the calendar date, May 9:

> "Tell me a way to make nine," suggests Heigl.
> "Seven plus two."
> "Five plus three."
> "Five plus three is eight," observes Heigl. "What can we do to get eight to nine? Do we go up or down?"
> "Up."
> "Right, and the symbol is "+". For going down, the symbol is " – ." Put the eight in your head and count the stairs to get to nine. Yes, fingers are great tools to help figure out answers."
> When Josh uses his fingers, he quickly changes his answer to five plus four. "I like the way you self-corrected," Heigl tells him.

"So that everyone can be an active participant, we accept any answer and then make it work," explains Heigl. "And we ask them to tell us how they got their answers. If kids can't tell you, they really don't understand. If they can't articulate their thinking, I tell them, 'I'll give you more time to think and then come back to you.' Everyone is held accountable."

Her approach is in sharp contrast to the traditional emphasis on the strengthening of associations until they become habitual – the skill and drill lessons that many educators still favor. And some educators believe that the mental math that Heigl teaches in workshops around the country is too advanced for kindergarteners. But Heigl argues that the emphasis on "thinking and becoming conscious of one's own thinking" helps children develop a range of flexible strategies to solve new problems. She encourages children to ask themselves, "If I don't know, how might I learn?"

If the emphasis on developing strategies sounds a lot like the goal of the literacy program, the similarities are not coincidental. Children are encouraged to see the connections between reading and math through activities that emphasize creating and recognizing patterns, analysis, and prediction. "Zero, the Mystery Bag" is a game that has all the rigor of a scientific discovery – taking data, predicting, testing hypotheses and verifying predictions. In this game, children formulate "yes/no" questions to find out what is in the bag that Heigl holds in her hands. "Just like when they write in their journals, they have to have a picture in their head from nothing," says Heigl. "Then they ask questions and it changes instantly to a new picture, as they listen to and learn from each other."

Zero, the Mystery Bag. Children are gathered on the circle rug to play a guessing game that might last several days. Although they are excited, they contain their bodies and their voices, as they listen carefully to the rapid-fire questions and answers:

> "Is it round?"
> "Yes."
> "Is it plastic?'
> "No."
> "Is it a power ranger?

"That's a guess. What kind of question could you ask to find out if it is a power ranger toy?"

"Is it something to eat?"

The affirmative answer is followed by a few hushed giggles.

"Yes."

"Is it small?"

"You have to compare it to something," advises Heigl. "An elephant is small compared to a dinosaur but big to me."

"Is it smaller than a ball?"

"Yes. OK, now put your idea in your head and talk to your partner about what you think it is. Then come up with a question."

"Is it candy?"

"Yes."

"Does it have a hole in it?"

"Yes."

"Is it sour?"

"No."

"Sweet?"

"Yes."

"Is there sugar on it?"

"What's the word you want?" asks Heigl.

"I'm thinking of caramel candy with a sugar coating," explains Michael, whose eyes are squinched tight, as he uses both hands to trace a picture in his mind.

"You mean is it sugar coated," Heigl asks. "No."

The children ask more questions: "Is it long?" "Can you suck it?" Is there wax on it?" Can you blow it?" "Is it squishy?" "Is it short like an ant?" "OK," their teacher sums up, "it's round, there's a hole in it, it's candy, not gum, it's chewy, not squishy, it's sweet but not caramel and you can suck it." You're right, it's lifesavers," Heigl tells the excited group.

But already a new problem emerges: If there are five lifesavers in a package and 30 people want lifesavers, how many packages would we need? When a child correctly answers six and explains that she got it by counting by fives on her fingers, Heigl adds a complication, "But I think there are 32 people; what should we do now? Pay attention to your thinking," reminds Heigl, "not just the right answer." In such an atmosphere, everything becomes a problem to be solved. Later, six children engaged in an art project are given two boxes of markers. "How many children should share each box?" asks Megan. "Two," they all answer. "How do you know?" comes the immediate response.

Creating a climate that encourages and rewards risk taking involves careful attention to the needs, both psychological and intellectual, of all the children in the class. In Heigl's classroom, as in all Helen Baller's classrooms, learning centers that appeal to children's multiple intelligences provide opportunities for children to make choices and build on their strengths. Children study life cycles not only by reading but by watching butterflies hatch from cocoons, incubating duck eggs, candling them to monitor growth, and growing a variety of plants. The library is frequently transformed into a science laboratory. Using classroom science themes, children explore the world around them through microscopes, magnifying glasses, laser disc technology, hands-on experiments, and literature.

Heigl considers providing challenges in a psychologically safe environment essential for children's optimal development. "We only increase the connections in our brains when we are challenged. Enzymes are emitted when the brain is intrinsically motivated and engaged," explains Heigl. "Changes come not from what the teacher has taught but from what the kid has learned. Every day I think, 'How can I build dendrites today?'"

Conclusion

Schools, Benard (1995) points out, have become a vital refuge for a growing number of children, fostering resiliency and "serving as a protective shield to help children withstand the multiple vicissitudes that they can expect of a stressful world" (Garmezy, 1991). At Helen Baller, the philosophy of the comfort corner – establishing caring relationships, building on strengths, offering choices, and encouraging responsibility, problem-solving, and communications skills – is integrated into the school community.

"We can't just preach it, we have to practice it," says Edwards. "It doesn't happen overnight; it takes time. We hold retreats, we brainstorm. In the beginning, we ask, 'What do we need to look like? How can we make it happen?' As we get closer to the target, we ask, 'Is this really what we want? How can we fine tune it?'" Although some work is done by committees, input from all staff is solicited and included. "We pick each others' brains and sometimes agree to disagree. That's the only way we can grow. But if a decision is made, we all support it," Edwards says. "Some of our staff meetings are intense, but all of us know we can express our opinion in a safe environment. That way, there are no 'get-backs' later on."

Staff at Helen Baller have defined education broadly, to include emotional, as well as academic competence. But this broad definition of education sometimes bumps up against the realities of standardized testing and increasing inequalities in children's readiness to learn. "Challenging children to do their best and keeping children from falling through the cracks keeps our plates very full," explains Edwards.

> We can't do it all. Although we see that all our children have grown in all areas, how do we show that, when on standardized tests, not all our kids 'measure up?' When families move here, they ask two things, 'What are your test scores and how do they compare to others in the state?' We try to educate families through our curriculum nights and we keep doing what we feel is most important -- helping children develop the skills and attitudes they will need to become contributing members of society.

HARBORVIEW/CAPITAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
JUNEAU, ALASKA

> Human beings are by nature social, interactive learners. We check out our ideas, argue with authors, bounce issues back and forth, ask friends to read our early drafts, talk together after seeing a movie, pass on books we have loved, attend meetings and argue out our ideas, share stories and gossip that extend our understanding of ourselves and others. Talk lies at the heart of our lives. This kind of exchange is never allowed in school, nor modeled there – not between children nor between adults. (Deborah Meier, cited in Bracey, 1994).

Conversations in the Classroom

An image of school as a place where children in orderly classrooms sit quietly at their seats engaged in "on task" behavior is deeply entrenched in American educational thinking. However, a visitor to Harborview/Capital Elementary School in Juneau, Alaska would look in vain for such children. Instead of tidy classrooms, classrooms are exciting, lively places that reveal a substantial tolerance for mess. Colorful, life-size paper mache birds -- nuthatches, blue herons, horned owls, wood thrushes, ruffled grouse, and peregrine falcons -- are perched on tables and clotheslines and hover amidst ocean dioramas, illustrated wall stories, posters, quilts, puppets, and multicultural dolls.

In a kindergarten/first grade room, over 100 feet of bright blue string, demonstrating the length of a Portuguese man-of-war tentacles, winds around tables and chairs, out the door, and into the hall. Suspended from the ceiling in a kindergarten/first and second multiage classroom is a life-size killer whale. Made of chicken wire, PCP pipe, papier-mâché, and construction paper, the project has taken two years to complete.

Circle areas for group brainstorming, singing, storytelling and instruction, and activity centers, spilling over with elaborate block structures, large floor puzzles, games, and painting and writing projects, offer inviting alternatives to individual desks. While at any give time, a number of children are quietly reading and writing, they are seldom sitting at desks; rather, they are lounging on couches, rugs, or rocking chairs. Children engage in dramatic play, tell stories, sing, care for a variety of plants and animals, paint, listen to taped stories and songs, and, most of all, take part in animated conversation -- about a book, a story in progress, an art or science project, or a math problem. For example, in a multiage kindergarten/first/second grade classroom, two children are discussing endangered species:

"1,000 wouldn't be enough."

"Yes, it would," comes the spirited reply. "Because all the girl cheetahs would have babies and there would be a lot more cheetahs. Then they wouldn't be endangered anymore."

"What if the babies don't make it to full size? Then what would happen?"

Next door, in another blended classroom, two children are discussing their writing assignment.

> "What would be better, being in charge of your family or in charge of the world?"
> "I'd rather be in charge of my family because then I could make my brother do what I want."
> "But if you were in charge of the world, you *would* be in charge of your family."

Rather than discouraging such behavior as disruptive and "off task," at Capital, these conversations are viewed as playing an important role in children's cognitive and social development. Teachers work collaboratively to provide a socially supportive atmosphere that encourages children to share strategies, exchange writings, and challenge each others" thinking.

A Family-Like Atmosphere

Surrounded by the towering Southeast coastal range mountains and with a view of icy Gastineau Channel, Capital serves approximately 200 children kindergarten through second grade. Because of a growing school-age population and lack of space, Capital is housed in separate quarters from the main campus of Harborview Elementary. Tucked away in an antique building behind the state's Capitol Building, the school offers the close-knit family-like atmosphere that can only thrive in a small school. Teachers at Capital, most of whom have taught together for seven years, feel that the school has benefited from its relationship with Harborview Elementary and also appreciate the autonomy they have enjoyed due to its separate quarters. They feel that the small size (only seven classrooms) facilitates collaboration among staff and the development of a shared sense of responsibility for children.

"Teaching can be an isolating experience," notes one teacher. "In a small school, staff become more comfortable with each other, there is much more crossover – staff see each other in the halls, have informal conversations. There is much less isolation." Activities, such as Friday afternoon dodge ball games, help build school community, as well as class identity. For "Dr. Dodge Ball," each class designed their own T-shirts. Prints made from fish, leaves, or purple, pink, and blue tie-dye identify the competing teams, made up of players from five to 50.

The sense of camaraderie and enthusiasm for teaching has led to a high commitment among staff, who spend far more time working on school-related activities, including professional development, than their union contracts stipulate. Principal Suzie Cary reports that on any given weekend, at least half of staff are working in their classrooms. As one teacher put it, "Teaching is my hobby, not just my vocation." A kindergarten/first grade teacher, when asked where she acquired all her resources, confessed, "I use the whole community. No one can be an expert on everything. I'm always on the lookout for materials and outside speakers."

A shared philosophy. Teachers at Capital value the mutual support provided by working collaboratively. The early childhood background of most of the teachers has contributed to the development of a shared educational philosophy and approach to teaching that many schools must work years to achieve. Avid readers and consumers of research, teachers share information, bounce ideas off each other, argue, and support each other, creating a climate of on-going professional development. Team teaching enables teachers to share responsibility for planning and engage in research into their own practices. This year, seven staff members from Capital will observe other teachers in the district who are considered to be experts in reading, writing, math, the arts, or integrating the curriculum in a project-based approach.

District support for practices implemented at Capital play an important role in the cohesive picture presented by staff at Capital. District endorsed "best practices" include: Project-based education; multiage classrooms; inclusion; technology across the classroom; conflict resolution; community of learners; standards-based curriculum; site based decision making; student-centered classrooms; multicultural and multilingual education; student-led conferencing; constructivism; portfolio assessment; teacher research; and systemic reform. (See Appendix A for the Juneau School District *Philosophy Statement*).

To say that creativity is valued at Capital would be an understatement. Visual arts, music, poetry, and literature are an integral part of the curriculum. Children make masks, paper-mache animals, quilts and cooperative murals, illustrate poems and wall stories, paint portraits, put on plays, and learn bird calls.. Posters throughout the school provide insight into some of Capital's underlying values and beliefs. In a kindergarten classroom, a quote from Piaget expresses a key tenet of Capital's philosophy: "The principal goal of education is to create people who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done – people who are creative, inventive, and discoverers."

Another, from Zephyr Press proclaims:

> Learning is natural. Children are active participants in their learning, not passive vessels to be filled.
>
> They are always seeking and choosing what they will learn and what they will not learn.
>
> Their interest, trust, and active involvement is crucial.
>
> Children tend to become personally involved in projects that appeal to a variety of modalities – reading, writing, reasoning, building, imagining, and creating.
>
> What a gift we give when we respect the child's natural need to explore, to reflect, to communicate, to dream, to celebrate!

Multiage classrooms. Multiage classrooms contribute to the relaxed and friendly atmosphere that is pervasive at Capital. Now in their fourth year of implementing multiage groupings, teachers at Capital have found that team teaching with one other teacher, preferably with an adjoining door, has worked best for multiage. Five of the seven classrooms are multiage; two span kindergarten through second grade; three kindergarten to first grade. In addition, some teachers choose to keep their children for two years, enabling children to form close relationships with both their teacher and with peers. Parents have responded favorably to both of these approaches and staff are committed to multiage grouping, citing multiple benefits. Debbie Fagnant, a kindergarten, first and second grade blended classroom teacher explains:

> Ideally, two-thirds of the children coming back are known commodities. I've already developed a relationship with them, which is an essential part of classroom management. The kids are connected to me and I to them. They also know the basic classroom routines and easily model these to students new to our community. I gain weeks of academic time because I know the strengths and struggles of kids who've "rolled over' from the previous year. With only a third of the class to assess we're able to move into the academic portion of the program more easily each fall.
>
> Parents of returning children are already comfortable with my classroom environment and expectations. For the hard-to-reach parents, who may have had few positive experiences in school themselves, this is especially important. They learn that we value them and consider them true partners in their child's education. Sometimes it can take four or five months to establish this level of trust.

Multicultural awareness. Harborview/Capital serves a diverse student body Sixty percent of the student population is Caucasian, 27 percent Alaskan Native, nine percent Asian, three percent Hispanic, and one percent is African American. Sixteen percent are bilingual. A team of staff members assist each other in becoming well versed on the issues of bilingual students and act as resources for all staff members in meeting the instructional needs of these students. Students who speak English as a second language are provided with in-class instructional assistance, as well as educational outreach to them and their families.

At Capital, diversity is studied, appreciated and above all, celebrated. Regular opportunities to learn about and appreciate diversity are provided in classroom discussions. Last year, through the district Indian Studies Program, children studied the Native Alaskan influence on contemporary Alaskan life, as well as their traditional life style. They held potlatches and studied traditional villages, including the animals and plants that were important to traditional peoples and how they were used. The project was successful in helping children appreciate and understand the local Tinglit and other Native Alaskan cultures. "Don't I have any Native Alaskan in me, not even a little bit?" one Caucasian student asked his mother.

Last year, on Family Involvement Day, at least 500 members of the Harborview/Capital School community celebrated their diversity with a huge multicultural potluck in the Harborview Gym. The school was filled with ethnic food, music, art, and multicultural dolls, made by families to represent their cultural heritage. After dinner and visiting, parents, students, community members, and staff danced together in line and circle dances. Twelve small group workshops, offered by families, staff, and community members, included Tinglit storytelling, Aboriginal art, a Phillipine stick dance, making Origami, and an Internet search of family roots.

Leading up to the celebration were many classroom discussions about the fact that all of us are immigrants, "that we all came from somewhere else." Parents and community members came in and talked about their cultural heritage and some newer immigrants talked about why they had come to America and what they brought with them from their home culture.

This year Harborview/Capital received a grant from Artist in the School funds to host a "Diversity Mural Project." Two Alaskan artists will spend two months working with teachers, children, and families to create a large cooperative mural on the outside of Harborview School. A multicultural potluck will celebrate the mural's hanging. According to the 1996 Harborview/Capital Report Card to the public:

> The purpose of the project is to use visual arts to form a bridge and to help us celebrate the wealth of our diversity. The project will serve the dual purpose of enriching our artistic experiences in the classrooms while leaving us with a constant reminder, through the mural, about the importance of art.

Partnerships with parents. "Just as with kids, it all goes back to the relationship," explains Debbie Fagnant, a kindergarten/first/second/ blended classroom teacher. "It's the same with parents. Parents will be connected to school if they feel comfortable with us, their children's teachers. Establishing that relationship is a big part of our job." Class newsletters every Friday keep parents informed about classroom activities and provide suggestions for home activities with their children. In addition to teachers' cellular phones, telephones in every classroom make it easy to call home and affirm children who are having a good day -- not just to discuss problems.

Informal activities, such as a welcome picnic in the fall held at the beach, offer a non-threatening opportunity for teachers and families to get to know each other. Through the year, family nights that focus on topics, such as reading, Reading Recovery strategies, or technology, maintain connections. Parents also play a critical role as volunteers in the classroom, helping provide children with the individual attention that (in classrooms of 27 children) is often difficult for teachers to provide. "This not only makes them feel respected for the skills they bring, but also they get to see children in a social situation," one teacher points out. They see what their child is doing for a good part of every day. It's wonderful!"

This year guidelines for developing a site Parent/Family Involvement Plan were drafted by a district committee (see Appendix B). Based on Joyce Epstein's model of family involvement, the intent of the program is to:

- Promote and support responsible parenting
- Promote consistent, meaningful two-way communication between home and school
- Include parents in the decision-making process that affects children and families
- Promote the integral role parents play in assisting student learning
- Welcome parents to the school and seek their support, involvement, and assistance
- Promote community collaboration to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning

The Juneau community is very supportive of the Harborview/Capital staff, their educational philosophy and practices. A formal assessment of parent opinions on a variety of school-related issues is reported in the annual Harborview/Capital Report Card, which is distributed to parents as a way to share information about the school. Parents provide feedback on curriculum and instruction, progress reports, parent conferences, guidance and counseling, discipline, communication, administration, facilities, food services, and bus service. Results of the survey show a high degree of satisfaction with all aspects of the school (See Appendix C).

An Active Child in an Active Social Environment

Capital teachers, like all teachers, are concerned with skills as well as in-depth learning. Despite, or perhaps because of the high value placed on creativity, children are not "just left to play." Measuring children's growth and using diverse measures to individualize teaching – linking assessment with instruction – is essential to good teaching. While a scientific-technological philosophy of education has resulted in standardized tests that objectively measure quantifiable knowledge and skills (dubbed the "fast food of assessment" by Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992), many educators argue that, while fast and relatively inexpensive, these tests result in no benefit to children and instead may have harmful effects.

Eight years ago, when Juneau schools moved toward a whole language approach to literacy and integrated curricular approaches that emphasize understanding over rote learning, primary teachers sought alternatives to the psychometric method of assessment and found few models to turn to. They wanted assessments that would address a broader definition of intelligence than that of standardized tests, encourage children to become reflective, self-directed learners, provide information to individualize instruction, and help parents to see their children's progress.

They wanted a lot, and over the next few years, a number of the district's primary teachers worked hard to develop a language arts portfolio system that would meet all these criteria. The language arts portfolios developed by Juneau primary teachers are now used in all the district's first through fifth grade classrooms and are increasingly used in districts throughout the state. They include a student reflection letter, written teacher narratives, reading and writing samples, a reading attitude survey, observations of speaking and listening, and reading and writing continuums (see Appendix D).

The continuums (see Appendix E) not only chart student performance but provide guideposts for teaching. "They provide the best training," says Mary Tonkovich, a district librarian. "In developing and using the continuums, some already good teachers have become very excellent teachers by really thinking about the process of learning to read and write" (cited in Caudell, p. 10). By demonstrating children's growth over time, portfolios avoid the static measure of achievement depicted by a letter grade. "The portfolios are very graphic," says Fagnant:

> Young children make quantum leaps; they're developing so fast – fine motor comes in and suddenly a child who labored to write a word is now writing a short story. Or an older child begins to use conventions. They'll say 'Look, I never capitalized the first letter in a sentence and now I do it all the time.' But portfolios do take time. The district provides a release day to write the narratives but teaching is a guilt-ridden profession. You could always do more – you'd love to spend two hours on each kid.

Early Literacy

Research has demonstrated a positive statistical relationship between the amount of time spent reading (and being read to) and reading comprehension, increases in vocabulary, and concept knowledge (Fielding & Pearson, 1994). In turn, the amount of time students *choose* to spend reading is enhanced by a combination of opportunities for social interaction, an abundance of reading materials, and teacher emphasis on free reading (Ng, et al., 1996). Teachers at Capital organize their classrooms not only to enhance children's ability to read, but their intrinsic motivation to do so.

To meet children's individual needs, each child has his or her own book box, containing books at their instructional level. While at first staff used only the books already leveled by the district's Reading Recovery teachers, they have taught themselves to apply the principles learned in this program to level numerous trade books, including those published by the *Wright Group* and *Scholastic*. Every day, children read in homogeneous reading groups, where teachers take advantage of "teachable moments" to conduct quick "mini-lessons" on phonics or punctuation. For quiet reading time and for taking home to read with parents, children choose from book boxes filled with such inviting titles as *Have You Seen My Cat?*, *I Went Walking*, *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*, *Have You Seen My Duckling?*, and *The Chick and the Duckling*.

In 1991, Reading Recovery was introduced in Juneau in a three-year training cycle. Twleve district teachers volunteered to be trained in this method. Although in 1994, a decision was made to invest Title 1 monies in other programs, the 12 trained teachers continue to work with a number of first grade children to supplement reading instruction. Teachers feel that the integration of many of the Reading Recovery strategies into daily classroom activities has benefited all children. For example, children are encouraged to develop a number of flexible reading strategies, a principle focus of Reading Recovery. Parents are encouraged to read with their children at home, using some of the same strategies taught at school (see Appendix F).

Teachers at Capital are quick to point out that literacy includes story-telling, as well as reading. A poster in one classroom reads, "Good stories are a native tradition. Reading is a loving experience." Legends are used extensively and offer an enjoyable way to integrate oral and written language with art. As a group, children listen to the story, tell it back, write it down, and finally illustrate it. Recently, children in a number of classrooms read "Gluscobi and the Wind Eagle," an Abenai Indian legend found in *Keepers of the Earth*, written by Michael Caduto and Joseph Bruchac. Several renditions of the legend, colorfully illustrated on numerous pieces of large easel paper, wind around classroom walls and hallways. Introduced into a study of wind and air, the story includes an environmental moral:

> Gluscobi went hunting for ducks in his canoe
> and the wind blew him back to shore
>
> He tried to go hunting again
> but the wind blew him back to shore.
>
> He asked Grandmother Woodchuck,
> "What makes the wind and where is it?

He went on a journey to find the Wind Eagle

As he walked the wind blew his clothes off

Then his hair and eyebrows blew off

Gluscobi met the Wind Eagle

He tricked the Wind Eagle by calling him Grandfather

Gluscobi told the wind eagle
he could make better wind on another mountain

Gluscobi went back home, dressed,
then went back to hunt ducks

There were no ducks
because the water was so dirty without the wind

He talked to Grandmother Woodchuck

He went back to the Wind Eagle
and called him Uncle

Gluscobi said it would be good if the wind
blew some of the time and didn't blow some of the time
And so it is to this day

During the time that Gluscobi paddles, the children learn an Abenaki song. Such projects provide opportunities for children to work together, enhancing collaboration, oral language, recall, writing, cultural awareness, and, of course, artistic expression. "Legends are also a wonderful way to teach environmental education" notes Mimi Walker, who draws on her childhood experiences in Southeast Alaska and her degree in fine arts to integrate art, music, poetry, science, math, social studies, geography, and literature into exciting and unpredictable classroom experiences

Mimi Walker's First/Second Grade Classroom

In Walker's classroom, Michaelangelo and Leonardo Divinci are not just Ninja turtles; they are objects of in-depth studies by the whole class. Children's art work covers the walls, inside and outside the classroom, including children's renditions of the Mona Lisa and portraits of Matisse and Van Gogh. To achieve the effect of a "real" portrait, Walker introduced a technique described in Betty Edwards's best seller, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain:* Children take a line drawing of an original painting and, turning it upside down, they then carefully copy what they *see* (with special attention to negative space), rather than what they *know* to be there. The portraits, which are devoid of stereotypic renderings of eyes, nose, and mouths, bear a striking resemblance to the original paintings and are easily recognizable.

Walker also uses her training in educational approaches popular at Reggio Emelia (a town in Northern Italy, renowned for its innovative schools) to help children expand their artistic awareness and develop techniques, not typically used by such young children. For example, for Mother's Day, the children created portraits of themselves and their mothers, after studying the life and work of American Impressionist Marie Cassatt, an artist who is well known for her mother and child portraits (see Appendix G). "Kids need to understand and grab hold of something," says Walker. "To make her real, we talked about her life, about how she never had children but painted beautiful portraits of mothers and children. The kids really get the connection; they'll say, 'She must have really loved children.'"

While Walker enjoys the ubiquitous stick figures that are the hallmark of five and six-year-old children, for this project, she wanted them to capture the softness and feeling of a Cassatt painting. Employing a Reggio Emilia technique, she projected a slide of one of Cassatt's paintings through a clear easel; the children then traced the outline of mother and child onto their blank paper on the other side of the easel. Using oil pastels, children added features and other details to individualize their portraits. The results surpassed even Walker's expectations and were a definite hit with parents.

Today, as I enter the classroom, children are noisily returning from recess, gradually settling down on the circle rug to sing a heartfelt version of *The Titantic*, led by a student who points to the words as they sing. The activity combines music, history, reading, and a dash of social commentary, as the children sing the familiar tale of how women and little children lost their lives and the less well known fact that the poor died at a disproportionate rate to the rich. (While only one child of the 30 children died in first and second class, in steerage 53 of the 76 children -- 70 percent, drowned):

> When the iceberg hit the bow
> They were off of England's shore
> But the rich refused to associate with the poor
> So they put them down below
> Where they'd be the first to go
> It was sad when the great ship went down.

Still seated at circle, the children's attention turns to the two children whose turn it is to present their previously written bird research reports. Accompanied by their newly crafted life-size, built-to-scale, paper mache versions of a great Blue Heron and a Bald Eagle, each student tells the class why he picked this particular bird to study, what he wanted to learn, and what he found out, including the habitat and size. After taking comments from the group, the reports finish with a math problem. The transition to small group math and science activities goes without a hitch as the children wind up circle time by jointly solving the ambitious problem, "How many toes on 100 Bald Eagles?"

"Theme is the key idea," notes Walker. I interweave themes into everything. It makes it easy for me to teach. I don't like little pieces. We have a lot of diversity here and themes make it easy to teach about other cultures. From history, we can spring off science themes that are really important." And of course everything is connected through art and music. For example, the song about the Titantic is part of a study of the history of ship wrecks in Juneau, which is studied by all first grade children. Children study this history through books, photographs, and field trips to the city museum. "An important part of that history," continues Walker, "is the fact that there were no regulations about how many life boats and life jackets should be on ships until early in this century. Singing about the Titantic helps them understand why these regulations came about."

But while poetry, song, and visual arts provide the "glue" that holds the projects together, other hands-on activities are also important. In a unit on bears, children studied all three kinds of bears (Brown, Black, and Polar) in Alaska by exploring bear skins, skulls, teeth, and claws, donated by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. They honed their mapping skills and knowledge of Alaska by mapping where these bears live. Making bears out of clay helped children to pay close attention to the shape and color of bears, and they were able to identify each others' bears by distinguishing characteristics. For example, one student observed, "This is a black bear but it is brown in color. If it were a brown bear, it would have a hump."

Families were included in the project through the class newsletter (see Appendix H) and with a homework assignment that asked each child to write down his or her family's favorite true bear story, which was shared with the class. And, of course, the project included a study of what bears eat -- children studied the Coho salmon's life cycle, learned about its anatomical structure though examining a real salmon, then painted the fish and made prints. Finally, a Native Alaskan from the community supplied a recipe for brine, which the children made, and they smoked a salmon in a smoker provided by the Indian Studies Program.

To culminate the unit on bears, they studied the Iroquois legend, "The Boy Who Was Raised by Bears." After learning the words from a tape of an authentic Native American song provided by Walker's sister, creating masks from casting material, and improvising a Native American dance, the children brought the legend to life in a dramatic production performed for families and classmates.

In *The Enlightened Eye,* Elliot Eisner (1991) writes, "The cultivation of productive idiosyncrasy in the art of teaching is as important as in the art of painting." In Capital's family-like atmosphere, both individuality and community are valued. While staff have created a tight-knit community, classrooms are as individualized as the teachers themselves. In Debbie Fagnant's classroom, interactions between children and between staff and children reflect the high value placed on following children's lead and cooperative learning.

Debbie Fagnant's Kindergarten/First/Second Grade Classroom

It's language arts time in Fagnant's classroom, where a workshop atmosphere prevails. Children are reading, some individually and some with a friend, writing stories and reports, and making birds for their bird research project. "Can you help me, Megan?" asks Anna, "I can't get my eye on my bird. It's a little too close to the beak." While the two girls put the finishing touches on the hummingbird, Fagnant helps individual children with reading and writing strategies. Listening sympathetically to a plea for help from Katy, who is suffering from writer's block, Fagnant turns to Katie's friend and asks, "Would you listen to Katie's story? She's solved two problems and needs help with another one." A few minutes later, Katie comes back smiling,

> "I did it myself after I read it out loud to Sara and she said it was a good idea."
> "Often, that's all you need to do," agrees their teacher.

Turning her attention to a child who has completed a first draft of his story about a field trip, Fagnant listens carefully, encouraging further writing with open ended questions: "Was there anything else you thought was important? Why do you think that was? Did it feel safe? Why do you think they built it underground? How do you know?"

To a child whose story is ready for a final edit before it is typed on the computer, Fagnant comments, "You know this is really a wonderful story. Are you ready to look at some spelling here, ready to put punctuation in?" Taking a strip of paper, she writes the word 'window' and explains, "You got all the letters except 'w.' I'll bet you knew what sound was missing."

Such individualized attention is a crucial part of Fagnant's blended classroom, which spans ages five through eight, but with a much greater developmental range. Attempting to get all of the children at the same place at the same time would be a futile task and Fagnant utilizes a number of strategies to assure that each child's need for assistance, encouragement, and challenge are met. Key to her success is the encouragement of cooperative learning, illustrated by Katie's and Anna's problem solving strategies described above. Children listen to each other, brainstorm in small and large groups, read together, and help and encourage each other in individual and joint activities.

An important aspect of the literacy program is the daily read-aloud time. Today, the children listen attentively to the first chapter of *Ramona the Pest.* Although the children take some time to settle into their comfortable positions on the circle rug, sofa, or table, there are no reminders to be quiet from Fagnant, who capitalizes on their enjoyment of the story to draw the children into the activity. Paying close attention to the group, she uses occasional questions to hold their attention: "Have you ever been called a pest? Can you imagine what it's like when Ramona makes a 'great big noisy fuss?'" "What does it mean to sit for the present?" Although several times attention is called to spelling and punctuation, the primary purpose of this reading period is enjoyment of stories.

A small child with somber brown eyes ignores Fagnant's announcement of story time and stays at a table, intently drawing pictures of trees, with careful attention to detail. Each time Michael finishes a drawing, he shyly shows me his creation, as he leaves his desk to put the picture in his cubby. Finally, with a flourish, he announces, "number eight," and his artistic endeavors are complete for the day. When the chapter is finished, Fagnant approaches Michael and asks him what he has learned today. When he doesn't answer, she quietly reminds him of how he said earlier that day that he didn't like to draw: "When I first asked everyone to draw a tree, were you happy...or mad?" After a short silence, Michael whispers "mad."

> "And look, now you have become an expert on drawing trees. Sometimes we learn to like things when we try them."

Although children as young as three-years-old are often expected to join all whole group activities, Fagnant explains why she chose to let Michael pursue his newfound talent:

> I knew the story was too difficult for Michael and I thought he was making an important discovery. Maybe he will be less reluctant to try new things after his success today. But I struggle with how much to expect children to follow my agenda and not their own. Sometimes I negotiate with the class to come up with solutions. Last year, we had a kindergartener, who was very young, had never been to preschool, and was developmentally delayed. Classroom routines were clearly impossible for him to follow. So one day when he wasn't there, I had a talk with the kids and we decided it was OK for him to have a different set of rules. It worked well and by the end of the year, he was voluntarily joining in many activities.

Reading and writing strategies. Despite an emphasis on individualizing learning experiences and a willingness to follow children's lead, Fagnant's literacy program is anything but haphazard. The incorporation of Reading Recovery strategies has helped to provide structure to an underlying whole language approach. "We don't just give them a book and say read it," assures Fagnant. Running records are used to identify books that children can read with 90-94 percent accuracy and a centralized building library ensures that children have access to a wide variety of inviting books.

And yes, even spelling is attended to, although children are encouraged to use developmental spelling for first drafts of papers. Fagnant uses a modified version of "Phonics Base," which includes basic phonics structures to test children's understanding and use of phonics to spell words. "You can tell where the holes are, if they need help with 'sh' or 'ing' and I target that." A high frequency word list of 1200 words is also used to identify words for children to take home and practice with parents. Fagnant explains:

> How could you *not* individualize, when some children have learned 30 words and some 600? It's my job to know through assessment where kids are skill-wise and to support building the skills they're ready to learn. I taught from a basal for six years and I know that phonics is important. The whole language movement has stressed reading for meaning and the development of strategies. We need to find a balance in our reading programs. We owe it to kids to give them tools and some of those tools are skills. The children are flourishing with this approach; they are much stronger readers, much earlier.

Title 1 assistants and volunteers, including parents, "foster grandparents," university practicum students, and peer tutors provide added support for children who are struggling with mastering basic reading and writing skills. Fagnant describes James, a first grade student who was able (with hours of individual assistance from a range of volunteers) to successfully complete both the research and creative writing assignment for the thematic unit on birds. Given the assignment of posing a problem and solving it in his story about a vulture (his bird of choice), he provided this food for thought:

> The baby bird was hungry. The mother bird couldn't find any food. She died in the nest. The baby bird ate her. The end.

Although James's mother became somewhat concerned when she learned of her son's macabre solution, Fagnant points out that James not only posed a very real problem, he solved it in a creative way, demonstrating an understanding of both the narrative form and the eating habits of vultures. Creativity comes naturally to Fagnant, who chairs a district-wide kindergarten-through-12 committee on writing and is an active participant and district representative in the Alaska State Writing Consortium, a teacher training program focused on techniques to teach and support children with their writing.

Taking advantage of the many writers in Juneau, the Juneau Writing Project also coordinates a Young Author's Conference, where local authors share with interested children their love of and frustrations about writing. The project also provides opportunities for children to showcase their writing. During Women's History Month, they publish "Woman of Distinction," highlighting significant historical figures, as well as women's importance in children's lives. Each spring, Inside Passages is published, a juried selection of the district's best student writing. With contributions from students in kindergarten through 12th grade, it is sold in local book stores and is regularly checked out of school and community libraries.

An emphasis on children's strengths and creative problem-solving in literacy development is also evident in Fagnant's approach to math. "Similar to what we do in whole language, I have a plan as to what I want the kids to learn. I set up problems that facilitate thinking in certain ways. Kids listen to each other and work together to develop strategies and solutions."

Mathematics: A search for meaning. At math journal time, children work together in pairs and small groups to solve their daily math journal problem. Today's problem reads:

> 42 girls and 38 boys want to play T-ball in the Parks and Recs League. The league has enough coaches for eight teams. If they place the same number of children on each team, how large will the teams be?

Suddenly, above the steady din of the classroom, the excited voice of a seven-year-old can be heard, "I've got it! But my calculations are different from yours. I got 11, not 12 on each team. It didn't come out even so I kicked a boy out."

"You should have kicked a girl out," comes his companion's immediate reply, "they're worse at T-ball."

A visitor might take umbrage at the political incorrectness of the friend's suggestion and at the math calculations of both students, but the enthusiasm that both display in their approach to problem solving is catching. A few minutes later, a kindergartener exclaims (upon finding an egg carton), "I know how many eggs come in this carton and the proof is 12 plus 6 is 18!"

But enthusiasm, after all, is a necessary but insufficient condition for success at math and although children are encouraged to use a variety of strategies to solve math problems, arriving at consensus on the final answer is considered important. Lest the reader be concerned that the two solvers of the T-ball problem will be stuck with their rather inequitable solution, Fagnant explains that both students have ample time to brainstorm strategies with an adult and peers and to revise and refine their problem solving skills. For Fagnant, a major goal of the math program is to help children's brains "stretch," and creating a "hair of disequilibrium" is a vital ingredient:

> During math problem solving, children always have the opportunity to work together. Their task is to come up with an answer which they can justify. I want their brains to be stretching, engaged in dialogue, really thinking. When kids share strategies with each other, most start out confident that they are absolutely right. In the midst of the exchange something powerful happens. Each child who explains his strategy is helped to think more clearly and reaches a deeper understanding by having articulated those thought processes. The children with incorrect answers, or who've used different strategies, may experience a real "ah-ha" of understanding. This builds respect between kids; they see each other as partners in this.
>
> I like them to come up with the right answer most of the time, but I'm not afraid of letting kids get stuck. If they are totally stumped, that gives them something to strive for the next time. I train parents to support children without directly teaching strategies . . . to ask questions, say 'hmmm . . . ,' or 'I wonder.' With time, support from each other, and occasional leading questions, kids will usually be successful in developing their own methods for solving the problem.

For this particular T-ball problem, the children, who typically find subtraction and division quite difficult conceptually, are encouraged to develop an understanding of division by "building it up" rather than "tearing it down." A Piagetian analysis might help explain why, like the White Queen in *Through the Looking Glass*, who "couldn't do subtraction under any circumstances," young children avoid "tearing it down" whenever possible:

> Addition involves only "ascending" from the parts to the whole in one direction. Subtraction involves both "ascending" (from the parts to the whole) and descending (from the whole to the parts). This thinking in two opposite directions simultaneously is so difficult that we often hear statements such as "I took away the 5 and the 9," "I subtracted the 5 and the 9," "I subtracted the 5 with the 9," and "Five take away nine equals 4" (Kamii, 1989, p. 76).

To find the number of children on each team, students begin to "deal" out players into eight separate groups to arrive at the correct number of 10 players. This is a strategy that not only comes naturally to young children but one that, by the end of the year, is familiar to all of them. Rather than memorizing facts, children are helped to explore their own ideas and to develop strategies that make sense to them, generating and discussing hypotheses in a collaborative setting. Throughout the year, students learn to name different strategies that they can use to solve equations, including using fingers to count all (e.g., in the problem, 2 + 6, count all 8 numbers); count first (e.g., hold 2 in your head and say 3,4,5,6,7,8); and count largest (e.g., keep six in your head and count 7, 8). Children also memorize some facts and extrapolate from a fact -- a "derived fact."

"I value problem-solving but I also want children to know math facts," Fagnant says. "We use a lot of strategies to develop fluency, including games with dice and cards. Mental math is used to facilitate logical thinking and the development of strategies." Even flash cards are used by some second graders. "Once I see that they have a solid understanding of addition, flash cards to memorize the facts are OK. But they're not appropriate for children if that understanding isn't firm. It would encourage memorization too early and deprive them of the opportunity to form their own mathematical relationships."

Finding a balance. Fagnant says that Capital parents, who, like most parents, are worried about their children being "ready for next year," are supportive of their approach, which balances skills and meaning. "They see all the things we do and that we value open-ended, language-based, high-energy activities, but we also attend to basic skill areas and to academics. They can see that we're attempting to do both. When parents understand what we're doing, they can support it."

Balance is also key to Fagnant's relationship with team teacher Fred Hiltner:

> We have different strengths as teachers and curriculum developers. We challenge each other. He's more global and I'm usually more linear. He will have this great vision and I'll say, 'But how do we make it work?' Every Sunday for an hour or more, we sit down and brainstorm ideas for the following week. We talk about what went well and what didn't the previous week. We'll ask about individual children. I'll say, 'Can you work with Tyler and give your impressions?' We come up with a whole pool of ideas and share the workload.

Conclusion

> Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite bands and just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water. Through an active, reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen learning how to learn (Malaguzzi, 1995, p. 79).

Finding a balance between seemingly conflicting responsibilities, complementing each others' strengths, challenging each other, brainstorming, talking, pooling ideas, and sharing are key to the cohesive and intellectually stimulating community at Capital. The school's small size fosters a continuing dialogue among staff, providing on-going staff development and aiding the development of a shared philosophy. Multiage groupings of children and the practice of keeping children with the same teacher for two years enhances children's opportunities to form close relationships with their teachers and with each other and teachers' ability to form trusting relationships with families.

While most of our nation's classrooms are set up to address the development of logical/mathematical and verbal knowledge, with particular emphasis on the written word, at Capital, children's social, emotional, and esthetic development are given equal attention. The Vygotskian theory that an active child and an active social environment collaborate to produce developmental change (Berk & Winsler, 1995) is put into practice here. Research has demonstrated what many primary school teachers have long known: Young children learn best in a socially supportive atmosphere that allows them to talk, discuss, exchange writings and points of view, share ideas, negotiate, and argue (Ng, et al, 1996).

Through careful assessment, or, as Fagnant puts it, "Knowing where kids are, the ways kids got to be where they are, what to expect, and what to do next," teachers design learning activities that fall within the "zone of proximal development" -- the difference between what a child can achieve independently and what he or she can achieve in conjunction with another person" (Berk & Winsler, 1995). At Capital, this concept is construed broadly, with an emphasis on the child's active voice and participation in theme-based curriculum and collaborative problem-solving activities. Warmth and responsiveness of teachers and cooperative learning are essential to an approach that emphasizes "assisted discovery." And talk and social interaction, often seen as the bane of the classroom, are considered vital to the growth and development of teachers as well as children.

MARY HARRISON PRIMARY SCHOOL
TOLEDO, OREGON

> Being able to think imaginatively, resolve conflict with grace, trade ideas with others and feel compassion are the building blocks of human relationships. . . . You may wonder how different some adults' lives would be if they had learned these skills as children (Heidemann & Hewitt, 1992).

We Are the Orcas

It's Red Ribbon week at Mary Harrison Primary School. Since the beginning of school, children have learned about friendship, communication, and conflict resolution. At class circle and early morning assemblies, children have observed skits and sung songs about these important competencies. School rules – *Play safely, solve problems, include everyone, respect each other, fun for everyone* – have been discussed, sung, and illustrated. Teachers and children have held classroom discussions about how friends can support us in making good choices for our lives and about the importance of compliments and respecting each other's feelings. Children have helped develop classroom rules, practiced "I" statements, and used a conflict resolution wheel (see Appendix A) in practice situations and to solve real problems on the playground and in the classroom.

In groups, in the library, in buddy reading, and at independent reading time, children in all ten of Mary Harrison's classrooms have read John Losne's story about a red ribbon and how it pulled a community together. And all this week excitement has built as staff and children have prepared for the march around the school wearing their multicolored, beaded friendship necklaces, with a huge red ribbon pulling them together.

First, both parents and children sorted thousands of colored beads into bags of single colored beads. At assembly, the idea of compliment necklaces was introduced. An orca puppet (Mary Harrison is seven miles from the Pacific Ocean) visited each classroom with the single-colored beads, presenting this gift to each child. Then, each time children exchanged a compliment, they also exchanged a bead. Now the multicolored necklaces reflect the many compliments exchanged and the children are ready for the march and the book picnic that will follow.

The march. Giggling quietly, the children, holding their red ribbon, march slowly out of Sue MeVeigh's classroom. As they wind down the hall, picking up one classroom after another, their voices grow louder. Just past the office, teacher Karen Johnson begins the school chant and 250 "inside voices" become a deafening roar:

> We are the orcas, the mighty, mighty orcas,
> Everywhere we go, people want to know
> Who we are
> So we tell them
> **We ARE the Mary Harrison ORCAS!**

Around the track the chanting continues, the crescendo gradually subsiding as the children re-enter the school and head for the gym for a brief friendship assembly of songs and a story. "We are a circle like the earth, like the sun and the moon above, a circle of friends and family, a wide, warm circle of love." "A friend is someone who likes you, a friend is someone who cares, a friend is someone who listens, a friend is someone who shares." Visibly calmer now, the children turn their attention to their classmate Tai Lai who reads from her journal, accompanied by two friends:

> Dear Journal,
> This is red ribbon week. I'm going to make a necklace with beads. I get a color of beads and my friend has a color. And then I give a compliment to her. When I give her a compliment I'll give her a bead. And she'll give me a compliment and we'll trade beads. But it doesn't matter about the beads, it matters about the friendship.

Share, Care, and Grow

"Mary Harrison has always been a caring school," explains Em Perry, a teaching assistant who has worked at Mary Harrison for 23 years. "If anyone needs anything, the staff is always right there. Years ago, when my daughter was seriously hurt in an auto accident, my church was wonderful about sending cards and prayers, but it was people from Mary Harrison who brought food and offered to run errands; they were there to talk to – do anything we needed."

In her long tenure at Mary Harrison, a small primary school, nestled into a hillside in the rural logging town of Toledo, Perry has observed a lot of changes: "Kids are getting harder, there is less respect for adults and they are more violent with each other; that's why we have to spend so much time setting a positive tone so they can all get along."

In fact, Lincoln County, in which the town of Toledo is located, ranks high on many indicators of risk to children and families, including incidence of child abuse, serious crimes, child death rates, and child poverty. Thus, staff at Mary Harrison feel that their first responsibility is to provide a nurturing environment where children can learn. The school mission statement, "Share, care and grow," succinctly sums up the school's philosophy. At the same time all children are introduced to an array of strategies and techniques for establishing and maintaining positive interactions with adults and each other, all staff members are encouraged to focus on building a positive school climate by actively examining day-to-day interactions with children.

Principal Barbara Fields notes, "Every single adult is responsible for building on the positive – in the hall ways, the bathrooms, the playground." A teacher in a first/second blended classroom adds, "There may be some place where the expression 'Do as I say -- not as I do' is effective advice, but school is not the place. We constantly ask, 'How do we talk to kids?' 'How do we interact with kids?' 'What behaviors are we modeling?'" A poster in the staff lunch room reminds all staff: "Your greatest contribution to humankind is to be sure you are a teacher who cares that every student, every day, learns and grows, and feels like a real human being."

Entering Mary Harrison, a visitor is likely to first notice the display of children's art work that lines the halls of this 46-year-old school. Hanging from the ceiling are huge banners welcoming children and teachers back to school and congratulating Fields on having been named district administrator of the year. Pictures, murals, illustrated poems, hand-made dreamcatchers, and illustrated wall stories attest to the strong emphasis on integrating art, literacy, and multiculturalism. Some illustrations include a description of the technique used. One reads, "First you draw a picture, then cover the lines with glue and let them dry; then color the picture with colored chalk."

But, walking down the halls or in the classrooms, it is the interactions between children, between staff, and between staff and children that soon capture a visitor's attention:

> "You've done a lot of learning about walking in the halls today," a teacher tells a six-year-old diagnosed with ADHD. "Keep on learning, you're getting better at it every day."
>
> Gabe, a seven-year-old who has struggled, not only with writing but with holding a pencil, grins as his teacher congratulates him on his writing. When a fellow teacher passes by, she is invited to share his success: "This is the best writing you have ever done."
>
> The kindergarten children are almost finished with their self-portraits but Jessica is still trying to figure out where to begin. "Here, have my mirror, that will help you know how to draw yourself," offers Ashley.
>
> A first/second grade teacher sings to dismiss the children for recess: "The first thing to do if you are wearing blue is line up at the door and wait for me. The next thing to do, if you are wearing green . . ." A shy blond six-year-old giggles and asks his teacher as he leaves the room, "Do grass stains count?"
>
> "I would have counted them," laughs his teacher, as she pats him on the back.
>
> "No, you're not in trouble," assures Mitch's teacher. "We talked about it and worked it out and next time it will be better."

There is an old adage that children learn what they live. Throughout the school day, children hear messages that deeply affect their attitude toward school and learning and their self-esteem. Compare the interactions described above with less encouraging interactions that many adults experienced as children and which still can be heard in schools across America: "Will you ever learn to stay out of trouble? Next time you won't get off so light!" "Gabe Hamacheck, you can stay in from recess and copy these words until you get them right!" "How many times have I told you not to run in the halls?!"

In contrast, in interactions that are practiced and advocated at Mary Harrison, the relational virtues described by Noddings (1995): sharing, showing concern, and demonstrating empathy are modeled and encouraged by the entire staff. Caring and compassion, as Meier (1995) writes are "not soft, mushy goals. They are part of the core of subjects we are responsible for teaching." In addition, caring promotes learning the more traditional curriculum. Perry observes, "Some kids resist our approach at first because they're not used to it. But kids know when you care, and if they know, they will try harder."

Reasonable Expectations

Due in part to the widely disparate socioeconomic backgrounds of Mary Harrison children, in part to multiage classrooms, each classroom represents a wide range of needs and abilities. Thus the question, "what do we expect from children" is couched less in terms of meeting a set standard of behavior or academic competence than in terms of, "What is best for kids?" To meet the needs of all children, the developmentally appropriate curriculum encourages children to explore the varied activity centers and engage in a variety of activities that promote literacy and problem solving skills.

Steven and Sara. Today in Sue McVeigh's first/second blended classroom, children are prioritizing their writing activities with their individual plan that includes journal writing, patterning, handwriting, and computer. The daily plans are designed to help children move at their own pace through activities and to eliminate the need for disruptive transitions. In addition, the plans are taken home every day and provide a concrete way for parents to address the age-old question, "What did you do today?" with their child.

It is the second week of school and Steven and Sara, both seven, are seated across from each other. After listening to their teacher's instructions, they begin their first task, writing their name and date at the top of their journal page. Quickly, Sara writes her name and date, thinks for a few minutes, and writes in her journal:

> My mom bote a new car. And traded the old gray one. But I miss the old one. But I like the new car to. I'll try to forget the old gray one. And like the new one. Besids My parents don't like the old gray one becus. When thay go somwer it stops. I don't like it that much. I just thingk of all though's years my parent's and the family was in the car.
>
> Well I like the new car. It's blue and a van. My mom bot a van becus. When we go somwer I have to site on my mom's lap. But NOW I Don't have to. My brother like's the new car becus we can have separate seats. Today after school I'm going to look for a van that's blue becus that's the car I belong to.

After responding to the request of a fellow student for help, she returns to her journal, deftly completing two pages of perfectly crafted letters before beginning the patterning task. Carefully, Sara colors the triangles in the first five rows, alternating magenta and purple. But by now, Sara is tired, and she eyes the remaining rows with a sigh. Resting briefly, she colors in a few more triangles before moving to the computer, an activity that their teacher suggests they save for last.

Across the table, Steven eyes his journal dejectedly. "I can't," he says matter-of factly. "I can't write my name." Fortunately, today there is a Title 1 assistant who, along with McVeigh, will divide her time between three children who need a great deal of support. By the end of the writing block, Steven has not only written his name but has written a sentence on his favorite subject, his vegetable garden. *And* he has remembered to use his finger to space his words so they don't run together.

With such widely divergent skill levels, staff at Mary Harrison use a variety of strategies to help all children be successful and self-confident learners. Most importantly, by focusing on what children *can* do, rather than what they can't or aren't doing, staff help children feel good about themselves and take responsibility for their learning. Knowledge of child development, as well as knowing each child well, guides staff expectations of children's behavior. Fields says that they talk a lot about what is reasonable to expect of children, in general, and individual children, in particular. When a new staff member expressed concern that kindergarten children weren't walking noiselessly through the halls in perfectly straight lines, they held a discussion about what children of this age could reasonably be expected to do and what was important for them to learn. Teachers then addressed what was identified as the central issue -- being considerate of others -- in classroom discussions.

Full inclusion. In Lincoln County, full inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classrooms is mandated. Rather than requiring children with disabilities to meet all classroom expectations, teachers strive to create responsive environments that build on the competencies of all children. For example, in a blended first/second grade classroom, where a child with autism uses sign language to communicate, the entire class is learning sign language. Thus, together, they create an environment that provides equal opportunities for all children to participate in the classroom community. A teacher observed, "Mainstreaming provides a great opportunity for all children to appreciate diversity. It's not just handicapped children who benefit -- children who may be struggling with their own developmental issues gain empathy and compassion through interaction with children with disabilities."

Enhancing Continuity for Children and Families

One of the key tenets of child development is that for true learning to take place, children must make connections between the known and the unknown. As Bowman and Stott (1994) point out, children's learning is context-bound, tied to specific settings. In order to make sense of their experience, children must see the connections between what they already know and what they experience in school.

A number of activities ease the transition from preschool to grade school. A state Transition Grant assisted staff to focus on the importance of transition, to work more collaboratively with the community, and to formalize an informal process which was already in place (see Appendix B). Staff emphasize that preparation for the transition begins in September of the child's preschool year, *not* in March, and involves much more than transferring records or getting ready for the next meeting. Instead, transition involves establishing relationships with families and with preschool providers.

Fields, teachers, parents, and teachers from the Head Start located on site meet frequently to share ideas and exchange information. Head Start children are invited to assemblies and to visit kindergarten classrooms. But it is not just children who are making a transition, families are transitioning as well, and families of all incoming kindergarteners, as well as the entire community, are invited to a number of activities during the year through flyers, radio announcements, and post-ups on bulletin boards. Informal potlucks, home visits, work parties, activity nights, and parent panels where kindergarten parents answer questions from parents of incoming kindergarten children, provide multiple opportunities for staff and families to get to know each other. Parents have an opportunity to talk about what their children like to do, what they are good at, and any concerns they might have.

Such careful attention to transitions is particularly important at a time when more and more children are entering school with unmet social/emotional needs.

Tears and temper tantrums. In this rural town, teachers are finding that much of the first few weeks of school are spent dealing with tears and temper tantrums. Dunaway argues. "Maybe when kids are older, their problems can wait, but when kids are five, six, and seven, we have to deal with their social/emotional problems first. It takes a long time to help kids feel safe, like a family. This year, we seem to have a large number of children who are having a hard time at school and at home."

> Four times a year, we do sociograms – we ask children to give us their first, second, and third choice for who they would like to sit by. We want to make the classroom a friendly place for them; if they are sitting near a friend, they feel more comfortable. But the sociograms also provide information about how children view each other. If a child is listed for first or second choice one time or less, it could be an indicator that they are at-risk socially. Of course there are other variables, but we include this information in our assessment of children's social development. This year, ten children were in this category. This is a very needy crew.

She describes a few of the situations she deals with on a daily basis:

> At the beginning of the year, I usually ask children to bring in a picture of themselves when they were babies or toddlers. Then we talk about the pictures and it helps children get to know each other. But Marci just burst into tears. I finally found out why -- she's been abandoned by two mothers and is being raised by her dad. Her first mother tore up all the baby pictures before she left. It never occurred to me that a child wouldn't have even one picture at home.
>
> And then there's Matthew. Just when I thought he was adjusting to school, today he has spent most of the day in tears. He cried when he thought he was in trouble for spilling my papers. Then he cried when Tasha took the track card I told him he could have to help him feel better. He refused to run laps at track because I wasn't on the playground. And this afternoon, there was one outburst after another.
>
> My student teacher wanted me to talk to his mother right away, but I told her, "maybe things are going so badly at home, my phone call could well be the last straw." You have to be patient, have some positives first, wait for the right time. His mother did come in today and told me that, last night, he talked to his dad for the first time in a year. He really misses his dad.

Helping Matthew to get through his "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day" and be hopeful about the next day is considered every bit as important as working on cognitive goals. Staff point out that research on the brain has shown that anxiety inhibits higher order thinking and that extreme stress activates a flight or fight reaction, effectively precluding learning. Helping children to feel psychologically secure is essential for all learning to take place. For Matthew, Dunaway explains, this means developing a close working relationship with his mother and helping Matthew move beyond temper tantrums. "We talk a lot about feelings, let him unload. But we don't dwell on it; we want to help him move through it – build up positive experiences."

Supporting families. Staff at Mary Harrison take seriously the aphorism "Parents are a child's first and most important teacher;" helping parents feel welcome in school is a top priority. A survey (see Appendix C) soliciting parents' perceptions about the first day of school asks, "Did you feel welcome at school? When you left your child at school, did you feel they were in a safe, caring place?"

Informal occasions such as potlucks, picnics, and fairs bring whole families to school for social activities. Monthly informational coffees are held for parents, both in the morning and in the evening, to accommodate differing schedules. Several times a year, parents are invited to attend family nights. Originally intended to provide parent education, these evening meetings changed quickly to "fun" nights when it was discovered that few parents were tempted by such titles as "welcome to the blended classroom" or "literacy night." While education is still a theme, parents are invited to come and enjoy activities such as art work, and "literacy night" has been changed to "fun with reading night." During one family night, families, using different textures and shades of colors, created a community mosaic – a huge orca whale -- which was then hung in the hall.

Open communication with families regarding changes in curriculum help parents stay informed and involved. Weekly classroom newsletters describe class activities, provide the words to recently learned songs, share recipes, and offer examples of children's work and suggestions for other "homework" (See Appendix D). While all parents are also encouraged to participate on the school's Site Council, a decisionmaking body, workshops and videos shown at family nights reach a wider audience. During one school workshop on integrated curriculum, principal Barbara Fields reported that, at first, parents were negative about the curricular approach. However, after departing, they expressed appreciation for their new awareness of the need for change. As Fields observes, "Educating parents is all part of the process of educating children. If parents understand the rationale for change, they will buy into it and support teachers and schools."

Family advocacy. For the last four years, Zann Johnson, who worked for five years as a special educator at Mary Harrison, has served as the school's family advocate, helping children build social skills and self-esteem and helping families with social and academic concerns, as well as with access to needed health and social services. Although not trained as a counselor, Johnson plays an important role in bridging home and school and breaking down barriers which inhibit home/school partnerships. Originally begun as a pilot program, the program has proven so successful that there are now family advocates in all elementary schools in the district. According to a recent Title 1 survey, parents consider the family advocate program the most valuable service that Title 1 provides.

Many of the communication building skills that Johnson teaches are integrated into the classroom and on the playground, including the use of a conflict resolution wheel. All day, teachers help children to reflect on their own feelings and behavior and increase awareness of others' feelings.

"Look at Heidi's face," Ryan's teacher tells him, "does she look happy? What can you do to comfort her and help her feel better?"

Rather than avoidance of conflict, teachers encourage children to focus on constructive problem-solving: "Let's go to the problem solving chart," suggests Karin Dunaway to a shy youngster named Mark, who is crying because Jannette hit him when he was on the playground. "You chose to walk away. Next time you might tell her to stop." Modeling an assertive "Stop it!" Dunaway asks Mark if he wants to try it. When Mark whispers "Stop it," while looking at his shoes and smiling, Dunaway tells him, "You know if you smile, she might think it's a game 'cause the way you look is also a message, isn't it? Don't worry, we'll work on this all year."

Teachers refer children to Johnson when they feel that additional assistance with anger management, conflict resolution, and friendship skills is needed. By helping children see a particular situation as a problem they can solve, rather than assigning guilt or deciding who is wrong, Johnson helps children relax and focus on a mutually satisfying solution: "The first time they come in they're worried that they will be punished," Johnson explains. "'Am I in trouble?' is the typical question they ask. And I tell them, 'no, this is where you come to solve your problem.' After that, children often bring themselves in, just to come in and talk."

Working with children, individually and in groups, Johnson uses a variety of activities to further problem solving, many of which are suggested in the wide variety of books which line her shelves, including *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk* and those by the Assist Program, *Helping Kids Handle Anger* and *Teaching Friendship Skills*. Johnson and the children hold discussions, role play a conflict and its resolution, work on individual behavior plans, and make puppets to act out their new skills at school and at home with parents. A turtle, made by the children, offers a four-step program on anger management: *Go in your shell. Think about the problem. Come up with a solution. Come out of your shell and talk about it.*

For students who are experiencing chronic academic and/or behavior problems, a Student Study Team consisting of representatives from community agencies, school staff, and parents, meets to problem-solve how they can, as a team, work together to support the child and family. If behavior is the issue, Johnson solicits ideas from parents on what strategies they use at home so that the child gets no mixed messages. And if the parents say, "We spank him and put him to bed without supper," what is the response? "We never (with the exception of abuse) tell parents that their discipline is wrong, we just offer alternatives," assures Johnson.

Helping parents develop positive behavior plans is a key part of Johnson's job. In addition, through Title 1 funds, the district's early childhood specialists offer parenting classes through a program called *Families First*. This year, Johnson hopes to develop a new resource for single parents. With an unusually large number of single fathers in the area, Johnson hopes to facilitate the development of informal support and trading of services. In Toledo, where gender roles tend to be very traditional, "a dad might fix a single mom's plumbing while a mom could sew and mend clothing or take a single dad's daughter school shopping."

Promoting School Dialogue: What Is Best for Kids?

Mary Harrison's philosophy of including everyone – parents, teachers, teaching assistants, support staff, and children -- in a supportive school community is aided by the smallness of the school: only 250 children and 30 teachers and classified staff. Face to face conversations are easy to arrange and staff take advantage of many opportunities to bounce ideas off each other; potential problems are frequently subjected to the scrutiny of the whole school. The question "What is best for kids?" is always in the forefront of the school dialogue, as staff constantly talk, argue, and share successes and challenges. As a result, the school staff (both certified and classified) have worked together to plan curricular changes, in-service training, and assessment procedures, with decisions being made by a leadership team which has rotating membership.

In Field's office is a poster that reads, "People support what they create." With an emphasis on keeping communication open, building on strengths, emphasizing the "positives," and practicing problem-solving, Fields, in her five years at Mary Harrison, has worked with staff to enhance team building and a sense of shared ownership for all aspects of the school. Teaching assistants, both district provided and Title 1 funded, are actively involved in classrooms, facilitating literacy groups and working with individual children who may need extra support. Fields is often found on the playground, substituting for a teaching assistant who may be busy with literacy or technology training. Such role reversal is an integral part of teamwork and shared responsibility, which Fields has worked to create from her first year as principal.

> From the beginning, I worked hard to help staff take ownership if they got bogged down. Now, when someone comes to me with a problem, I turn it back. I ask, 'How are you going to solve it?' It's less clear-cut, more frustrating, and messier, but the outcome is better. There is more ownership and buy-in when we're all part of the problem-solving process. It becomes a school problem and 'how are we going to solve it as a school?' We're always looking to do a better job. There's no one right answer.

Consensus is less efficient than top down decision-making but staff agree that although the process is time consuming, the result – a democratic school community – is well worth the effort. Means and ends, process and product are integrally intertwined in this small rural school. As one teacher put it, "Luckily at our school, we have a very democratic process in place. Our principal is completely committed to it, to the point that it takes us forever to make decisions. But I wouldn't trade it even for benevolent and efficient dictatorship."

Despite the many opportunities for informal discussion, staff feel that time for staff development, planning, and collaboration is very limited -- "a constant barrier." However, last year a monthly early release provided much needed time to work on curricular issues, learn the details of the state's new academic requirements, and work on easing transitions between schools. This year, seven early release days will provide time to address literacy, math, assessment, technology, and "making learning meaningful and relevant."

This year staff will work on integrating math into their thematic curriculum, expand their use of technology, and solidify and expand the focus on "wellness" and non-violent problem solving. One of six Lincoln County schools to receive an Edward Byrne Memorial Grant, Mary Harrison will receive extensive training in the *Resolving Conflict Creatively Program* (RCCP). Begun in 1985 as a collaboration between Educators for Social Responsibility Metropolitan (NY) Area and the New York City Board of Education, the curriculum stresses the modeling of nonviolent alternatives for dealing with conflict, teaching negotiation skills, and demonstrating to children that they can "play a powerful role in creating a more peaceful world."

Aimed at all the adults in children's lives -- principals, teachers, support staff, volunteers, and parents -- the program provides in-depth training, curricula, and staff development supports, establishes a student peer mediation program, offers parent workshops, and conducts leadership training for school administration. Key to its success is the emphasis on creating a school-wide culture of non-violence and the follow-up support that teachers receive. Each new teacher is assigned to an RCCP staff developer who visits from six to ten times a year, giving demonstration lessons, helping the teacher prepare, observing classes, giving feedback, and sustaining the teacher's motivation (see Appendix E).

A district "Self Renewing Schools" Grant will focus on "wellness," complementing the conflict resolution grant and the school focus on integrating curriculum and building community. Fields notes that it is not only children who need a nurturing environment in which to grow and develop. "The grant will provide time for staff to concentrate on what we want to do for ourselves," explains Fields. "Over the summer, we met to discuss friendship, nutrition, health, and fitness. If staff is excited about it and modeling wellness, it will carry over into our interactions with kids." Early this year, staff will discuss their needs and activities will be planned to meet those needs, from help with quitting smoking, to managing diabetes, to stress management concerns. And, of course, staff will also integrate the concept of wellness into the curriculum for children.

Making Connections

The emphasis on developmentally appropriate practices, which blossomed under the leadership of principal Anita McClanahan, has broadened and expanded over the years. Strengthened by experience, action research, and through intensive study of relevant literature, the original "core beliefs" (see Appendix F), based on a developmental approach, still reflect Mary Harrison's educational philosophy. Brain-based research and Howard Gardner's research on multiple intelligences, in particular, have further influenced their thinking on teaching and learning.

Staff at Mary Harrison have worked for years to provide an integrated approach to curriculum, emphasizing projects and themes that help children see the connections across disciplines. Proponents of an integrated curriculum strive to create a lively classroom environment by encouraging active, engaged learning through open-ended discussion and multiple modes of inquiry. Based on brain research, which demonstrates that the mind is designed to perceive patterns and relationships and works best when learning takes place in the context of meaningful activities, integrated curricular approaches encourage children to bring all of their intelligences and experience to the learning activity.

Last year, an artist in the school grant – "teachers as artists and artists as teachers" — brought local artists into the school to teach both children and teachers new skills and understandings about traditional Brazilian dance and culture, making pottery, and creating cooperative murals.

The ease with which music is integrated into classroom activities reflects the early childhood background of many of Mary Harrison's teachers. Soft music – *Peer Gent Suite*, Native American flute music, African vocal harmony, and music from the Shaker Religion -- plays in the background of many classrooms, as children explore the inviting activity centers or read quietly with a friend. Music is used to ease transitions, as teachers call children to circle to announce the end of one activity and the beginning of another, to dismiss children for recess, to teach reading and poetry, and to build community through group singing.

Both school-wide and classroom themes help children make connections between the known and the unknown. Themes such as community, wellness, and life cycles help provide a broad conceptual base, without becoming a "wall around the curriculum" (Rosegrant & Bredekamp, 1992). With the Oregon coast only seven miles away, the ocean is a frequent object of study; children read and write about ocean animals and their habitats, visit the nearby aquarium, and enhance their understanding of ecological systems.

First/second blended classroom teacher Janay Kneeland notes that respect for the earth and an understanding of the interdependence of all living things is a natural outgrowth of respect for each other and for all people. In her classroom, the visual arts play an integral part in developing environmental themes. Last year, children read *Dear Children of the Earth: A Letter From Home*, a story by Schim Schimmel, in which the earth talks to children. Children wrote and illustrated individual letters back to the earth, describing how they felt they needed to take responsibility for caring for their planet. In a final project, children created T shirts with illustrated environmental messages, after first making a written design.

Incubating duck eggs combines scientific rigor, literacy, and nurturing. Of course, children read stories about ducks: *Make Way for Ducklings, Puddles, and Have You Seen My Duckling*? While the eggs are incubating, children keep a daily book about what is happening inside the eggs. "Candling the eggs is always a source of excitement," Kneeland says. "They say, 'Wow, what's that burrowing around in there? Look, it's moving; I see veins!' The ducklings imprint on me because I'm the first thing they see and hear. "Kids love to see the ducklings follow me outside and swim in the small swimming pool inside the classroom. They learn responsibility by feeding and watering them twice a day and cleaning their cage. It's amazing how kids who can be careless with each other can be so tender with a little duckling."

Give it a go. Whole language approaches, emphasizing the learning of phonics, punctuation, and spelling in the context of actually reading and writing, have been used for years at Mary Harrison. Children read individually and together -- lying down, curled up in rocking chairs, and in the housekeeping corner. Children read to their peers, help each other with words, and practice choral reading with a partner, a strategy that children initiated which has proved to be "a great way to build self-confidence" for less competent readers. Every day, teachers read to the entire class, such stories as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Ramona the Pest*, and *The Little House Books*.

Strategies developed in New Zealand and introduced through the Reading Recovery Program – leveling of books, independent book tubs, guided and independent reading and writing, running records for assessment of emergent literacy, and literacy groups -- have gradually been added to most classrooms and have enriched and systematized the literacy curriculum. Although basals are still utilized, they are used flexibly as part of a curriculum that includes a wide variety of trade books. A poster with a quote from Don Holdaway, the New Zealand educator responsible for developing shared book experience, reads:

> There is no scientifically ratified sequence of skills in literacy development. Every program uses a different sequence and this is determined by opinion rather than science. A truly developmental sequence is one displayed in the behavior and characteristics of the pupil. When basal scope and sequence charts are presented as "developmental," this is a misuse of the term.

Reading, writing, and spelling are seen as developing "hand in hand." A draft of a philosophy statement on writing (see Appendix G) reads:

> We can use the natural interest that children have in writing by encouraging their beginning steps, providing guidance and practice, and knowing when and how to move them along the road of continual improvement. By understanding the basic developmental nature of written expression we can make children see writing as an enjoyable and purposeful process. The foundation we lay in the early primary years is an important step toward the benchmarks and CIM outcomes.

"Give it a go," is heard frequently in classrooms, as teachers encourage children to write often and to check spelling after their thoughts are on paper. Staff have found that frequent writing helps develop fluency and self-confidence. "I guessed and goed and I got it right!" exclaimed one young writer in a multiage classroom that I visited. But the atmosphere of encouraging risk -- taking belies the underlying structure. Children are expected to use all the writing modes, defined by the state's writing process standards -- narrative, imaginative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive – and reflect on their own writing samples, which are then included in portfolios.

To monitor the progress of each child, teachers use the six writing traits described by Vickie Spandel in *Seeing with New Eyes*: Ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence, and conventions. Literacy bands from *The English Profiles Handbook* are used to chart children's progress in spoken language, reading, and writing. For example, a beginning reader holds a book the right way, turns pages from the front to the back, refers to letters by name, identifies known familiar words in other contexts, and responds to literature by listening intently and joining in familiar stories. Although there is a strong emphasis on authentic assessment that reflects the child's performance during typical activities, the need to show progress toward the new state benchmarks has resulted in a twice a year writing prompt, in which children respond, without assistance, to the following directions:

> Each child will choose a shell from a collection. They will respond to the following prompts: Describe this shell in detail. What does it smell like? What does it feel like? What does it look like? What does it sound like?

The responses are assessed with a continuum, based on the writing traits and teachers pick one goal to work on, based on the assessment. A number of services are available for children who may be struggling academically. A school-wide Title 1 school, Mary Harrison has the services of three part time Title 1 assistants and two Reading Recovery teachers. Because individual children no longer have to meet income qualifications to enjoy the services of Title 1 teachers, teachers have more flexibility in planning their curriculum and can group children heterogeneously, a practice that fosters inclusion and cooperative learning.

For example, McVeigh, the Title 1 coordinator, is training teaching assistants to facilitate literacy groups, in which children engage in shared or guided reading. "We needed to work with more than one child at a time, so we formulated literacy groups," explains McVeigh.

> There was such excitement among staff and children, it just grew. Often we start with having each child write down the words they know. We (teachers) write too. We point to each word as we read it. If they can write it, they can read it and vice versa. If I know that a word – say "hat" – is coming up in our book, we write a lot of "at" words. We talk about what is the same in each word. Then we open the book. One of the words they know is in the book. So they have a hook on this book – there is something known and it builds their confidence.

Although staff are excited about the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery Program for most children who need intensive one-on-one support, a number of teachers expressed concern that this program, which is highly successful in New Zealand, may not always transplant well from a country that has the highest literacy rate in the world, to this country where literacy is less valued and where children have grown up with TV, rather than books. In particular, they feel that a number of their children who qualify may not be developmentally ready to benefit from the program during the first part of first grade, the usual period for Reading Recovery intervention.

In order to maximize the benefit for children, staff prefer to wait until the second part of the year to target children who may need other interventions, such as hands-on activities to develop fine and gross motor skills, familiarity with books and stories, and help with concentration. "But this is not a 'wait and see' approach," assures Fields. "It's not just give them time and they will grow. We carefully assess each child to see where they are. Some kids need structure, some need hands-on activities, some phonics, some may need special education later on. We can't just wait for the child to develop."

Top-Down Standards and Reduced Funding

Despite a number of strategies that target children who are at-risk for school failure, at the end of third grade, many of Arcadia's children (Mary Harrison's receiving school) are scoring below the proficient range in Oregon's standardized language and math tests. These tests, as well as the new state benchmarks, are beginning to exert pressure on primary teachers to bring all their children up to these standards.

Although staff are also under pressure from parents to "know where their child stands" in relation to the other children at their grade level, many of Mary Harrision's teachers believe the benchmarks are unrealistic and even punitive to children who start out furthest from the standard. A number of teachers expressed concern that no matter how hard they try, many kids, who don't "measure up," will form a self-image as "not proficient," leading to anxiety, loss of self-esteem, and eventually to school failure.

Let's take B, for example. Karin Dunaway, a first/second grade teacher in her eighth year of teaching, is outspoken in her views on assessment for young children: "We want appropriate assessments that show how much children have grown. It's not that we don't want to examine our practices and keep improving, but these standards pigeon-hole kids, making them failures before they can grow." Karen Johnson, also a first/second blended classroom teacher, agrees. In a letter to the Oregon Board of Education, she wrote about two children, B, diagnosed as a "slow learner" (but not slow enough to qualify for special services) and T, who was reading Laura Engels Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* books on her first day of first grade:

> They have both made tremendous growth this year. They have both worked very hard. Where is the value in pointing out HOW low B's achievement is relative to a standard? If there was help afterwards . . . if there was some additional means offered to help him meet the standard, then I am all for the testing. But without it, the test results will be an insult to B and to me. The tests quantify how low he is relative to other kids. That is not going to help me at all, and it will hurt him.

In her journal, she wrote:

> As I took part in the discussion (about standards), I thought to myself . . . "We are like no other school I know of. It is not in our repertoire to say to a child: 'You don't meet a standard.' And when you set *one* standard, there *will* be losers. We envision a school full of winners, and we try really hard to never discourage a child or a family. In the context of everyday work samples, we can tell them how to help and where the needs are, but we refuse to say, 'you're not good enough.'

Fields shares their concerns and expressed frustration at Oregon's reduced funding for education. A five-year-old property tax limitation has resulted in a steady decrease in funding for schools and human services. Now Oregon is bracing for the effects of a new "Cut and Cap" initiative that will cut $450 million from school property taxes over the next two years. Fields notes:

> We have a system that frequently pits primary, elementary, secondary schools, and other agencies against one another in competition for scarce funding. We set up families by not providing support. We need to meet kids' needs when they're young. There are no counselors until they get to middle school. By that time, many kids are beyond repair. We have higher class size than the middle and high schools. There are 27 kids in our classes, with decreasing assistant time -- and we're supposed to make a difference!

Yet, despite moments of frustration, staff believe that their efforts *do* make a difference and, as for the latest property tax cut, they are "going to fight that battle with we come to it." Already they are tackling the assessment dilemma by pooling resources with a number of other elementary schools in the area to create developmental continuums for reading, writing, and math, "assessments that will show that children are moving toward the target." These assessments will be field tested in the participating schools and may then be available for schools across the state. Fields continues:

> It is our responsibility to come up with something that does show growth and that is developmentally appropriate. If we don't do it, someone will do it *to* us. And this project will give us the opportunity to meet with other schools, share resources and ideas. We have to get beyond being immobilized and move forward to meet the challenge.

A Constructivist Approach

At Mary Harrison, constructivism, in theory and practice, bears little resemblance to the image of the lone child constructing his/her own world almost in isolation, an approach that has dominated the thinking of many early childhood educators. Instead, staff pay careful attention to the profoundly social nature of children's development. Two of Mary Harrison's kindergarten teachers, Jana Folkers and Karen Johnson, have studied consturctivism in depth, as masters students in an inquiry-based program, in which "teachers reinvent curricular theory for themselves" through reading, discussion, and action research.

Karen Johnson's Blended First/Second Grade Classroom

Seven years ago, substitute teaching at Mary Harrison Primary School for the first time, Johnson was met with the following scene which took place at the morning assembly: Principal Anita McClanahan, a self-described "antique educator with 21st century ideas," was seated at the piano, leading the entire student body and staff in a spirited rendition of a song she had written about the importance of responsibility. Overhead a giant banner spelled out the word for all to see. All were having a wonderful time; only one thing was missing – one of the "I"s in responsibility. As several teachers tried to get Mc Clanahan's attention to correct the mistake, the whole auditorium erupted in excited cheers at the grand finale: Frank Ransom, the custodian, attired in a bright red Superman-type shirt with a large "R" for responsibility, swung out on ropes from the top of the stage curtains onto the stage.

The experience convinced Johnson that Mary Harrison was where she wanted to begin her teaching career and she has been there ever since. Trained as a research biologist, as well as an elementary school teacher, Johnson has found that she can combine her love of wildlife, art, and music in her lively classroom. This year, as part of a year-long focus on change and life cycles, children have raised salmon eggs and released the fry into nearby streams, incubated duck eggs and watched the eight ducks emerge from their shells, made a sundial to check the path of the sun across the sky throughout the school year, created ocean habitat boxes, and served as Bee Tour Guides for their resident bee colony, donated and maintained by a local bee farmer.

Literacy is an integral part of these projects, as children make written and oral reports and use the experiences as springboards for creative writing. For example, a study of the ocean included reading books about ocean animals, leaning songs about the sea, and writing reports, poems, and stories about sea animals. As in all Mary Harrison classrooms, a strong focus on ecology is evident in the illustrated poems and stories that cover the walls and spill out into the hall. Biopoems next to ocean dioramas invite the reader to guess what creature is being described. One reads:

> I go through the sea like a butterfly
> My shell grows when things come down to me
> My home is in the sea with all the creatures
> I grab creatures with my pincers
> I am a hermit crab.

Creating group poems is one of the many ways that Johnson encourages collaborative learning. To help children become comfortable with writing poetry, music and poetry are interwoven into classroom activities. Soft music often plays while children work, the class reads poetry individually and in groups, and singing together is a frequent activity that eases transitions between activities, enhances class solidarity, and provides non-threatening opportunities for rhyming and rhythm.

Johnson encourages children to start their writing with non-rhyming poems, such as the one above, and with topics that children know well. A group-created poem about art (see Appendix H) surpassed even Johnson's expectations. It begins "I LOVE ART. Art is your imagination. It is expressing feelings. It is COLORS." An "earth rap" written and illustrated collaboratively by the whole class, provided an introduction to rhyming and shows Mary Harrison's strong emphasis on conservation and respect for the earth:

> Earth is earth. Oh earth is earth.
> She is the one who gives us birth.
>
> Earth is our home. It's the only one we got.
> It's getting real trashed up, and don't say it's not.
>
> We can help the earth. We can start a new day.
> So let's get together and have it this way.
>
> Trees and forests disappear into sand.
> And if we Don't do something, it will ruin all the land.
>
> Animals grow. Animals die.
> If we work together, we can clear the sky.
>
> So stop your littering. Reduce your trash.
> Or our beautiful planet will start to crash.
>
> If you help today, and you help tomorrow.
> Then we'll clear the trash that made this sorrow.
>
> Recycle, reduce, reuse and close the lid
> Because all this trash is stuff we did!

Earth is earth. Oh earth is earth.
She is the one who gives us birth.

Creativity has always played a key role in Johnson's language arts program, but it was mathematics that was the subject of her masters project, a project that entailed designing and implementing teaching practices based on constructivist theory.

Designing and Implementing a Constructivist Mathematics Curriculum

> We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us. (Marcel Proust, cited in Briggs, Folkers, & Johnson, 1996).

Through numerous and varied hands-on games and activities, Johnson encourages children to develop their own understanding of mathematics so they can apply it to real-life problems in all aspects of their lives. An emphasis on mental math, as well as hands-on activities, ensures that children not only learn math "facts," but also understand the underlying concepts. It is sometimes said that in a constructivist classroom, it is the teacher's job to set up the environment so that children can make discoveries themselves, without teacher interference. However, teachers Briggs, Folkers, and Johnson's (1996) view of teaching, articulated in their collaborative masters thesis, is far more active:

> As teachers, we look for challenging problems that will land our students on the edge of a cliff. We must help them find the motivation and courage to take the leap across the chasm. Not every learner needs the same distance to cross. If the gap is too wide, a child will falter and lose confidence. If too narrow, the child won't stretch, and instead just follow a prescribed course. Students must take this leap of understanding, over and over again. When the confusion is resolved, a bridge has been built across the chasm, bringing power and flexibility of thinking (p. 36).

In a curriculum guide, developed as part of their masters thesis, successful constructivist teaching strategies are described:

- Listen to children's thinking. Use their words and work as a window to see their processing and perspectives.

- Ask questions to help children clarify their thinking, rather than give answers: "Tell me your thinking. What did you notice about...? Remember how you solved a simpler problem.

- Let kids talk about math. They need to share their strategies and misunderstandings with their classmates.

- Search for problems that children can solve their own way, often with concrete models or manipulatives.

- Help students move gradually from understanding at a concrete level to symbolic level by continually building connections from the known to the unknown.

- Experience disequilibrium yourself now and then. Try something new. Take risks for your children to see. Collaborate with other teachers, and feel the joy of stretching!

The guide includes lessons organized around four mathematical strands: Classification (patterns and sorting); geometry; measurement, and numeracy. For each strand, a few sample lessons and a Performance Based Task with Scoring Guide are included (see Appendix I). Johnson and her colleagues have implemented most of these games and activities in their classrooms, modifying them to meet the needs of their children. Key to the process of enhancing higher order thinking is the use of higher order questions, careful observation ("encouraged, modeled, and taught"), and moving from concrete to abstract thinking thorough games and activities.

For example, the game "What's My Rule?" initially involves putting people into groups and having children discover the relationships by sorting, (e.g., boy, girl, striped, solid shirt). Later, they play Mr. D's Island, in which a dragon puppet with a proclivity for sorting, chooses an attribute and sorts things, including shoes and words. The study of measurement began with children measuring length, using their hands, feet, and arms to measure items in the classroom:

> This then led to discussions about measurement and why answers differed for the same item. Disequilibrium occurred as the children discovered their answers were accurate yet different from another person's answer. Through this discussion, the children began to realize that we needed to agree on a standard unit that could be used by all.

Activities are structured so that all children can be successful. When children study the concept of "area," they measure "almost everything," On the day I visited, children, working in groups and in pairs, estimated how many four-inch tiles would cover their desks. Then they covered the desks with the tiles and counted, using a variety of strategies, from counting all tiles, to multiplying length by width. The excitement was contagious as children used their understanding of area to guess the number of tiles needed and see how close their guesses were to the actual number, revising their estimations as they went. Two children whose estimation was exactly right hopped up and down excitedly and Johnson joined in their celebration.

Each year, after working together on a variety of problems in measurement, classification, numeracy, and geometry, children become confident of their problem-solving skills, as well as their collaboration skills. This year's measurement activities culminated in a performance-based task called Mystery Cylinders and involved a partnership with a class in nearby Waldport. Older children measured length, weight, circumference, and capacity of their of mystery cylinders, while kindergarten children used only three parameters. Children collaborated in pairs to measure and record information clearly.

The data, the measuring tools, and the cylinders were then sent to Waldport to see if the children there could determine which cylinder went with which data. The children were scored on the basis of accuracy and readability and children also scored themselves on collaboration. Johnson reported that the project was a great success, as children measured with confidence and worked with "great concentration and collaboration."

Riddles, as Johnson tells parents in a newsletter home, "really get the brain juices flowing." Johnson uses riddles to teach a variety of concepts, including numeracy, patterns and sorting, and measurement. In a newsletter home, she explains that coin riddles:

> reinforce the numeracy concepts we have been working on and they help us practice using the values of the coins. Coin riddles have two clues: 1) the number of coins, and 2) the total value of the coins. Then the guesser has to figure out the specific coins. For example, I'm thinking of 3 coins that equal 11 cents. What are my coins? Answer: 2 nickels and one penny.

While at first, the coin riddles are done with actual coins, after "plenty of practice, children can begin to solve them in their heads." Johnson combines a problem solving approach to math with some old fashioned methods to facilitate fluency. Although activities such as "Around the World" (which children enjoy playing at home and at school) involve using flash cards, rather than relying on strict memorization, children are encouraged to use strategies to improve their ability to solve problems efficiently, building from a known fact to solve a harder problem. For example, if the problem is 6 + 5, the strategy might be, "If I take apart the 6, I have 5 + 1, and I know that 5 + 5 is 10, so the answer is just one more than 10. It's 11."

Central to the success of a constructivist classroom is an environment that encourages and is safe for risk-taking. Briggs, Folkers, and Johnson write in their masters thesis:

> In constructivist classrooms, a positive social climate is critical to learning (Kamii, 1985). Children must feel safe to defend their current understanding, to interact with peers and adults without fear of ridicule, and to express their thinking openly. They must be able to risk being wrong so they can learn from the disequilibrium they experience (P. 9).

Building a Community of Learners

C
You talk to me and I'll talk to you.
F G
This is the way we make peace.

You talk to me and I'll talk to you.
C
Friendships will never cease.
F C
So grab your problems in your hands,
G C
And let us talk about it.
F C
We can brainstorm or make a deal.
G C
We can sing it. We can **shout** it!

Johnson's voice is soon joined by a chorus of children, as they slowly finish their writing projects and gather on the rug for a group sing and a brainstorming session about the next activity. After singing in both English and Spanish, voices turn rowdy as children launch into a class favorite, *What to do with a lazy sailor?* "Let's try that again; we want to use *sailor* voices, not *shouting* voices," reminds their teacher, and the song continues through six rousing verses, complete with exaggerated gestures.

The children move from excitement to calm as Johnson begins a song written by a student's mother: "We are a circle, like the earth, like the sun and the moon above, a circle of friends and family, a wide warm circle of love." Pointing to the words written on chart pack, Johnson invites children to read along, "Remember, people who have eyes up here and follow the words and sing the songs are learning a lot." After singing several more songs, an announcement that it is time for "marketplace" is met with cheers.

But before children move to their desks to set up their stores, ground rules must be reestablished and remembered from the last "marketplace." All are eager to contribute: "No stealing." "No returns." "No knocking people's things off, and if you do it by accident, say you're sorry." Johnson listens carefully, nodding agreement and expanding on children's suggestions, "That's right, we're community and we take care of other people's things. Can we bargain?" she asks.

> "Yes, but we could say no," responds Sara.
> "And remember," you don't want to make people feel bad about their stuff," advises Brenna.

"Yes," Johnson agrees, "compliments are great, it would be great to hear lots of compliments. But we have one more thing to negotiate: should we have music or no music on while we have our stores?" When a quick vote reveals that almost all children would like soft music in the background, Johnson assures the few holdouts that the music will be played very softly so as not to disturb anyone. With last minute reminders to only "eat two things," and a quick refresher lesson on making change with the play money, the children quickly assemble previously made signs and a wide array of goods, including baseball cards, pine cones, homemade baked goods, balloons filled with cornstarch (named squish and wish), friendship bracelets, and hand painted pictures and poems.

Benefits of multiage groupings. The store activity, which combines literacy, numeracy, problem solving, decisionmaking, and negotiating skills, is one of many traditions that has been passed down from the older children to the incoming group of first graders. A staunch advocate of multiage groupings, Johnson explains:

> Traditions don't die in your room, they keep going. Kids listen to each other and catch excitement from each other; the excitement is passed on. It's a way of challenging and teaching that doesn't die. The younger kids benefit from having older role models, and there is less anxiety over the summer for the older kids. And they take ownership of helping the class run smoothly. Competition is reduced; instead of worrying about being the best, children learn to nurture each other.

Before school starts for the first graders, Johnson sets the tone by having a meeting and work party for the older children, where they discuss how they can help everyone feel comfortable in the classroom. Each year, the "elders" help the younger children to find and use the various materials in the numerous activity centers and to serve as role models for social and academic skills. By pairing readers and nonreaders, older children act as peer tutors, which, as Johnson explains in one of her weekly newsletters home, "helps the elders to cement their understanding and gives them confidence in their abilities."

Girl troubles. Of course, even with a carefully created school-wide and classroom culture that emphasizes inclusion, children sometimes fail to follow the third Mary Harrison rule, "include everyone." Classroom discussions, in which children share feelings and brainstorm solutions, are an important avenue for building community and resolving conflict. In a journal kept for her masters class, Johnson discusses one such session.

> We are having "girl troubles" in my class. Some girls are being excluded at recess by a group of other girls. We had a "girl talk" in my class yesterday. I invited a good friend of ours, Judi Beatty from the library, and we shipped off the boys to play bingo with Teecia. We talked about our feelings of jealousy and being excluded. We heard from a girl who shared about being teased for being fat (she's not a bit fat). We talked from our hearts about how it felt to be a friend and to have a friend turn away.

But as their teacher, Johnson knows that although these discussions will help each child broaden their understanding of friendship and relationships, such information cannot be directly transmitted from adults to children:

> I hope it is beneficial. I wish I could just pass wisdom about these matters on to these girls. But I realize this is NOT possible. All I can do is be a good listener and help them find a path to their own truth. I can't shorten the process or lessen the pain. I can be there to model the way to be a friend. I can interrupt obvious behaviors, but I can't transfer my wisdom about relationships to them. I wish I could.

Discussions, brainstorming, group singing, collaborative learning, multiage grouping, and, perhaps most importantly, modeling respect and caring are effective strategies for building a classroom community. Developing partnerships with families widens the circle of inclusion and helps bridge the gap between home and school.

Including families. Weekly newsletters home and an open invitation to call her at home on evenings and weekends with questions and concerns helps parents feel informed about and included in the classroom activities. Parents are invited to share hobbies and interests with the class and to volunteer in the classroom. But, most importantly, parents are encouraged to participate in their children's education by reading the newsletters and discussing them with their children and by engaging in the home activities, included in every newsletter. In one letter home, Johnson explains the difference between home activities and homework:

> Home activities are my answer to homework. It's not required, but I guarantee your child will learn a lot if you take the time to help them with it and turn it in the following week. It is a way of saying you value their learning, and it may ease the children into "REAL

> HOMEWORK" when they reach third grade. I will read the work in front of the class, and the participants get a special treat at lunch time. I'd love to see more families take part. *Here is one for this week*: Collect three leaves that are all from different plants. Write some descriptive words about each one (colors, shape, size, texture, smell, sound). Bring in the leaves and the words. We'll try to guess which description fits which leaf.

Although, or, perhaps, because there is little ethnic diversity at Mary Harrison, Johnson feels that helping children understand and appreciate cultural diversity is a crucial aspect of schooling.

Culturally responsive teaching. The poet Rene Char has said, "For those who are walled up everything is a wall…even an open door." One of the first steps teachers must take in creating a culturally responsive and relevant learning environment (to open the closed doors and windows of walled-up cultures) is to engage in reflective self-analysis, to examine their attitudes towards different ethnic, racial, gender, and social class groups (Banks & Banks, 1995; Delpit, 1995).

In her journal, Johnson reflected on her own life journey, one that has included experiences far from the small logging town of Toledo. As a young teenager living in Europe, she was attracted to books about injustice and read about slavery, Jewish history, South Africa, World Wars, and women in history. "My mom kept trying to introduce me to happy books, but for some reason I was drawn to the stories of the heroic real people who managed to rise above the injustice of the world at great personal expense." But after attending a racially troubled high school, she struggled with sometimes overwhelming feelings of sadness and anger:

> It took the rest of my high school years to sort out the race riots and hatred. I remember being really shocked when I first experienced hatred. I believe this period of reflection and eventually resolution laid ground for many decisions I've made in my life since then. What I felt at first was anger. It eventually turned to sadness. And finally I began to accept that the hatred inside people was a product of a society that disenfranchised and dehumanized them. I realized that nonviolence and justice were our only hope. And love was the only force on earth stronger than hatred.

From these reflections, she developed an action plan that includes growing in personal awareness of potential biases and their effects on the children in her classroom, teaching multicultural awareness through modeling tolerance and acceptance of differing viewpoints and cultures, and exposing children to a variety of cultures though in-depth study: "I believe children who are exposed to different cultures can begin to accept and honor differences. This acceptance at a young age can lead to a more open attitude toward others and an awareness of stereotypes."

A study of Native American culture focused on art, literature, and the Native American relationship to their environment. The project included a field trip to the nearby Siletz Indian Reservation, where two tribal members talked about their culture and history. Native American families in the classroom contributed stories and authentic details of modern native people. "Their pride and interest in their culture was what made this study successful," notes Johnson.

Numerous hands-on activities reinforced children's understanding of cultural diversity, as children studied about and made dream catchers (by bending willow branches and weaving them together with sinew), wooden dolls, clay pots, and decorated leather pouches. In a newsletter home

Johnson tells parents, "The kids amaze me with their attention to detail and the care they take with these projects." Such activities help children to widen their understanding of the world and its people, but it is teacher as role model that Johnson believes is of vital importance in primary school classrooms. Her views on diversity are an integral part of her educational philosophy, summed up in reflections on prejudice, written in her journal:

> I became a teacher in my 30s because I wanted to make a difference. I had tried other jobs, and it never seemed that I could really use a combination of passion, creativity, and intellect that I possess. Teaching is where they merge for me. Integrated in my lessons, I try every day to model the valuing of people, their differences, and their unique response to the world. I try to celebrate diversity in my room and help children appreciate their own unique gifts.

Conclusion

Elliot Eisner (1991) has defined literacy as "the ability to encode or decode meaning in any forms used in the culture to represent meaning." At Mary Harrison, this broad definition of literacy guides teaching and learning. The curriculum is illustrated, sung, studied, reflected upon, discussed, practiced, modeled, and, above all, integrated into the everyday lives of staff and children. As Eisner points out, schools are not preparation for life, they *are* life.

Despite reduced funding and the inevitable inequalities in children's readiness to learn that result, in large part, from the rapidly increasing gap between rich and poor, staff at Mary Harrison have created a school community that nurtures the developmental potential of all children. At the same time, they approach the task of meeting state mandates with creativity and resolve. Staff development, revolving around the question, "What is best for kids?" keeps children and families at the center of the on-going school-wide dialogue.

Well versed in child development knowledge and the latest research on teaching and learning, staff are confident in their ability to help all children develop positive attitudes toward school and learning and to provide many of the experiences they need to succeed in school and beyond. But staff expressed the opinion that nothing short of a basic change in our priorities as a nation would enable schools and social service agencies to meet the increasingly complex needs of children and families.

PUTTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FIRST

> Your greatest contribution to humankind is to be sure you are a teacher who cares that every student, every day, learns and grows, and feels like a real human being (poster in Mary Harrison Elementary School's staff room).

Tolstoy once said that while unhappy families are unhappy in very different ways, happy families are very much alike. Schools are a lot like families. Although all of the Northwest schools profiled here have their own cultures with unique strengths and challenges, they also share many common characteristics. Five major themes emerged from these case studies. All sites emphasize (a) A broad definition of literacy that includes aesthetic, social, and emotional literacy; (b) instruction that is tailored to the individual needs of the child; (c) staff development based on teamwork, dialogue, reflection, and staff research into their own practices, as well as relevant literature; (d) building on children's prior knowledge and experience; and (e) creating a circle of community, one that includes families, children, staff, community members, and other schools.

A Democratic School Community.

A central goal, in Elaine Meeks words, "is to create a positive school climate as seen through the eyes of the child." To do so requires not only careful attention to interactions and relationships between teachers and children, but throughout the school and community, as well. "Education takes everyone," announces a poster at Helen Baller Elementary. In these Northwest schools, teachers, families, secretaries, family advocates, teaching assistants, foster grandparents, "reading visitors," custodians, child development assistants, bee keepers, and administrators all make important contributions to the care and education of young children.

In such an environment, the role of the principal has evolved from direct instructional leadership to the role of facilitator of group inquiry, "collaborative leader," liaison to the outside world, and orchestrator of decisionmaking (Wohlstetter & Briggs, 1994). "People support what they create" reads a poster in Barbara Fields' office. "A vision needs to be collective; it emerges from the culture. You can't get people to support someone else's vision," explains Meeks.

These statements support the findings from a rich literature on adult learning that shows that teachers and support staff need to construct their own understandings and theories through a wide variety of opportunities to observe, read, practice, reflect, and work collaboratively with peers. As Joyce and Calhoun (1995) point out , "Staff development must not be offered as, 'here is stuff that has been researched, so use it!" (p. 54). Staff at all four of these Northwest schools form study groups, engage in individual and collective inquiry into research and their own practices, attend workshops, share expertise, brainstorm, pool ideas, argue, challenge and support each other.

The result – a democratic school community – is "less clear-cut, more frustrating, and messier but the outcome is better. There is more ownership and buy-in when we're all part of the problem-solving process," notes Fields. Disagreements are expected, conflict resolution focuses on constructive problem-solving. "Some of our staff meetings are intense but all of us know we can express our opinion in a safe environment," says Pat Edwards. Deborah Meier (1995), former director of the highly successful and innovative Central Park East Schools, points out, "Public schools can train us for such political conversations across divisions of race, religion, and ideology. It is often in the clash of irreconcilable ideas that we can learn to test or revise ideas or invent new ones" (p. 7).

The role of families. Families play a crucial role in the ever-widening circle of inclusion. "Just as with kids, it all goes back to the relationship," explains Debbie Fagnant. "It's the same with parents. Parents will be connected to school if they feel comfortable with us, their children's teacher. Establishing that relationship is a big part of our job." Non-threatening and enjoyable activities – picnics, potlucks, work parties, multicultural celebrations, authors' parties, field days, family fun nights, literacy fairs – lure even the most reluctant parents to school. Frequent newsletters and phone calls, surveys, traveling books, "Floppy Rabbit's Journal," parenting education, home visits, family resource centers, and referrals to community resources help keep parents supported, informed, and included.

In turn, most families are supportive of their schools. "Educating parents is all part of the process of educating children. If parents understand the rationale for change, they will buy into it and support teachers and schools," says Fields. And if families don't understand or approve of particular curricular approaches? Including, rather than marginalizing, parents who have concerns helps solve inevitable conflicts in positive ways. Meeks notes, "We have to communicate with parents. Our approach is not a rejection of the basics. We take current knowledge of learning theory and find better ways to teach and learn. We need to have the ability to articulate what we're doing."

High expectations. A shared sense of responsibility for children's learning includes high expectations *of* and *for* children. Children are encouraged to make choices, to participate actively in learning experiences, to reflect on their thinking, feelings, and behavior, to take ownership for their learning and social interactions, and to be responsible to self and community. Literacy, considered the essential goal for all children, is defined broadly to include "the arts, numeracy, and the emotions." "If I have a problem, I don't say, 'I don't want to talk about it like I used to,'" says seven-year-old Max, a successful graduate of Helen Baller's Comfort Corner. "I can talk about how I feel – angry, sad, down, left out. And sometimes I don't feel like talking. . . I know that it's OK to feel sad or mad . . . But it's *not* OK to be mean."

Encouraging conflict resolution and appropriate expression of emotions, developing relations of trust, serving as friend and supportive listener, and helping children imagine how others think and feel are considered essential to good teaching. Knowing that emotional competency is learned best through interactions with peers and adults, staff emphasize the crucial role they play as models of attitudes and behaviors. As one teacher put it, "There may be some place where the expression 'Do as I say – not as I do,' is effective advice, but school is not the place." In her journal Karen Johnson wrote, "Integrated in my lessons, I try every day to model the valuing of people, their differences, and their unique response to the world."

Does This Approach Ignore the Basics?

In *Dumbing Down Our Kids: Why America's Children Feel Good About Themselves but Can't Read, Write, or Add*, Charles J. Sykes argues that schools are enhancing children's self esteem but ignoring the basics. Is the emphasis on nurturing and caring merely a warm, fuzzy approach to education that conflicts with or replaces a more rigorous curriculum? Nel Noddings, Professor of Child Education at Stanford, argues that, in fact, "Caring implies a continuous search for competence. When we care, we want to do our very best for the objects of our care. To have our educational goal the production of caring, competence, loving, and lovable people is not anti-intellectual. Rather, it demonstrates respect for the full range of human talents" (1995, p. 676).

What the research says. The factory-model school, with an emphasis on competition, hierarchical authority, and a view of teachers and principals as interchangeable parts, still exerts a strong influence on our educational system. However, based on a synthesis of literature about human growth and development, Argyris (cited in Clark & Astuto, 1994) concluded that hierarchical, bureaucratic work environments are more likely to lead to immature behaviors, such as passivity, dependence, and lack of self-control and awareness. In contrast, schools organized as caring communities have been shown to foster a shared sense of responsibility, self-direction, experimentation, respect for individual differences, and high expectations (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Lewis, Schaps & Watson, 1995; Newmann, 1993).

Are these characteristics correlated with children's success in school and beyond? Researchers on school restructuring have identified a number of commitments and competencies which lead to improved outcomes for children, including: (a) high expectations for all children (Newmann, 1993; Benard, 1993; Nieto, 1994); (b) a commitment to learn from and about children, building on the strengths and experiences which children bring to school (Bowman, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Meier, 1995); (c) "giving wider choices and more power to those closest to the classrooms" (Meier, 1995, p. 373); (d) working collaboratively with families and the community; and (e) development of schools as caring communities (Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1995; Meier, 1995; Newmann, 1993), defined by Lewis, Schaps & Watson as: "places where teachers and students care about and support each other, actively participate in and contribute to activities and decisions, feel a sense of belonging and identification, and have a shared sense of purpose and common values."

Brain research indicates that emotional intelligence is the bedrock upon which to build other intelligences, and that it is more closely linked to lifelong success than is IQ (Goleman, cited in O'Neil, 1996). Research has demonstrated that emotions can speed up or inhibit the thinking process. Under conditions of high stress, the brain goes into "survival mode;" higher order thinking is impeded. Creating a psychologically safe environment, then, is not a frill to be addressed only after the basics are attended to; for young children, such an environment is essential for learning. And although in many schools, there are few opportunities to talk about feelings and concerns, children's ability to learn is often jeopardized by the neglect of their emotional well being. "When children are worried about Dad going to jail, not enough money to pay the rent, or parents fighting, learning is the last thing on their mind," notes Kathy Duley.

The educators who participated in this project believe that establishing a climate of caring and respect promotes learning of all kinds. Em Perry noted, "Some kids resist our approach at first because they're not used to it. But kids know when you care, and if they know, they will try harder." Her observation points out that children's intrinsic motivation to learn is integrally related, not only to the relevance of the activity, but to their relationships with caring adults *because the disposition to learn, in large part, depends on a positive sense of self.*

Joanne Yatvin, a superintendent of a rural district and principal of a small rural school in Oregon writes:

> In order to learn, a child must believe: I am a learner; I can do this work; craftsmanship and effort will pay off for me; this is a community of friends and I belong to it. Because such beliefs often are not the inherent property of children who come from splintered families and dangerous neighborhoods, teachers today must work as hard on them as they have always worked on the intellectual side of learning (1992, p. 7).

More than what districts mandate, more than what teachers teach, it is children's *interpretations* of themselves as people and as learners that determine what and how they learn.

Starting Where the Learner Is

The most eminent educator of the seventeenth century, John Amos Comenius, believed that children can discover new information by building on their prior knowledge and experience and, conversely, unless learning is meaningful to students, it has no place in school (Goodman, 1989). It has taken 200 years and the influence from a growing body of research from such diverse fields as developmental psychology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, early childhood education, and brain-based research for this commonsensical insight to impact educational practices.

Building on what children know, or as Debbie Hogenson put it, "bringing *out* existing knowledge and bringing *in* new language and understanding," is the basis of sound pedagogical practice. By concentrating on what children *can* do, rather than what they can't or aren't doing, staff help children view themselves as competent learners. Learning centers – puzzles, games, listening centers, computers, writing centers, play dough, blocks – that appeal to children's multiple intelligences help children "find their comfort level," in Alona Dickerson's words. In these classrooms, children are seldom seen quietly sitting at their desks. Instead, they are painting, caring for plants and pets, building elaborate block towers, putting on plays, measuring, predicting, estimating, sharing ideas, reading, writing, and arguing.

Brain research helps explain why it is important for children to be physically active in the classroom. "Physical movement juices up the brain, feeding it nutrients in the form of glucose and increasing nerve connections – all of which make it easier for kids of all ages to learn (Hancock, 1996). Generally, the younger the child, the more important it is for active engagement with materials, peers, and teachers, in order for learning to take place. When children are able to talk while they work, sharing ideas, excitement, and laughter and when their hands are active, their minds are engaged.

Writing Floats on a Sea of Talk

But does all this talk and activity lead to literacy? "Writing floats on a sea of talk," reminds Elaine Meeks. Children write in their journals, create individual and cooperative poems, write letters to pen pals, family, and friends, publish stories, write research reports, and record science observations. All of these activities involve bouncing ideas off of peers and teachers, sharing problems, and offering advice. The social nature of the activities helps both children and families see literacy as valuable and meaningful. Doug Crosby compares a traditional worksheet with a traveling book:

> Think about a worksheet – it might take 10 or 15 minutes to fill out a worksheet and it will be thrown away or hung on the fridge. Take a traveling book. It might take an hour to make it. Each child might read it with their mom and dad for 10 minutes. It comes back to the classroom, becomes part of the classroom library and is read during the day and, at the end of the year, becomes part of the school library. How many hours of reading and enjoyment is that book giving to kids? (cited in Braunger, 1995).

Children seem to read everything and everywhere. They read sprawled on couches, rugs, and rocking chairs, in a tepee, in a plastic bathtub filled with pillows, and in inviting reading nooks, decorated with quilts and curtains. They read individually and in groups, out loud and to themselves; they read songs, poems, their own and each others stories, the print-filled walls, and choose from hundreds of trade books. Dickerson explains:

> This way, with so many choices, children can be successful right off the bat. We don't just give them a worksheet and if they can't do it, they just sit there or disrupt the class. When we just used basals, they could only read the basals; it didn't transfer to other books. Now they never say, 'I can't read, I can't write.' At whatever level they are, they can do it. They feel like they're free but, really, we've set it up so they can be successful. The freedom empowers them to be learners and it has almost eliminated discipline problems.

Avoiding false dichotomies. If these classrooms bear little resemblance to the schools where many adults were educated, they also are quite unlike the image of the lone child constructing his or her own knowledge, almost in isolation, that has dominated the thinking of many early childhood educators. The interactive nature of children's learning is carefully nurtured, as teachers work to meet each child's need for encouragement, assistance, and challenge. Such an approach is not teacher centered. As Dickerson says, "At the end of the day, I don't say, 'My lecture was great, I did a great job today.' I say, 'The kids did a really good job today' and they leave saying it to themselves." Nor does the teacher abdicate his or her important role. Glenellen Pace (1993) writes:

> This is not a laissez-faire approach. As the teacher, you are a central player, not someone who "sits-out," afraid of "getting in the way of" students' knowledge construction. But neither is this approach teacher centered, where your meanings are the meanings students must 'get." Instead, you play multiple roles: demonstrator, mediator, keen observer, and listener (p. 4).

Helping children's brains "stretch," "creating a hair of disequlibrium," and "looking for challenging problems that will land our students on the edge of a cliff," are considered essential for "building power and flexibility of thinking." And, although teachers don't make a "fetish out of telling" (Bruner, 1996), telling *is* a part of pedagogical practices.

"We don't just give them a book and say, 'read it,'" explains Debbie Fagnant. "We owe it to kids to give them the tools and some of the tools are skills." Thus, the debate regarding whole language and phonics, which are often seen as polar opposites – "reading is a matter of getting the words and getting them right" versus "take care of the sense and the words will take care of themselves" – is resolved in favor of both approaches. An article in the *Cherry Valley Literacy News* concludes:

> This approach to literacy instruction is not anti-skills. In fact, phonics and spelling are important strategies that are taught in context as part of a whole, exciting, meaningful and appropriate program for the child. Each child is an individual, progressing on this journey at their own rate. Together, parents and teachers can support and celebrate as our children grow in their own ability to read, write, and speak.

But this approach *is* in sharp contrast to the traditional emphasis on the strengthening of associations until they become habitual – the skill and drill lessons that many educators still favor. Instead, teachers encourage children to explore their own ideas and develop a range of flexible strategies that make sense to them. Spiegel (1995) explains: "Effective strategy use is metacognitive. The learner knows a problem exists, identifies the problem and puts into effect a fix-up strategy to bypass or solve the problem" (p. 91).

Metacognition – being aware of how one goes about one's thinking and learning – is encouraged through opportunities for generating and discussing hypotheses in a cooperative setting. Janice Heigl notes, "We encourage them to think and give their best thought. We work hard at getting them to articulate their thinking and we share the different thinking, not just one right answer. I want them to ask themselves, 'If I don't know, how might I learn?'" Bruner (1996) observes:

> Achieving skill and accumulating knowledge are not enough. The learner can be helped to achieve full mastery by reflecting as well upon how she is going about her job and how her approach can be improved. Employing her with a good theory of mind – or a theory of mental functioning – is one part of helping her to do so (Bruner, 1996, p. 64).

Assessment. Finding a balance between developing skills and in-depth understanding involves careful assessment and tailoring instruction to the individual needs of the child. In Fagnant's words, "Knowing where kids are, the ways kids got to be where they are, what to expect and what to do next," is essential to individualize instruction. Key to the assessment process is systematic observation of children engaged in authentic reading, writing, and problem-solving activities. Teachers use running records, individual reading conferences, literature logs of books read, tapes and transcriptions, reading, writing, and math continuums. Most importantly, teachers listen carefully to children, gaining insight into children's interpretations of their experience and fostering mutual respect and understanding. The advice that Briggs, Folkers, and Johnson gave in their curriculum guide is put into practice by these educators: "Listen to children's thinking. Use their words and work as a window to see their processing and perspectives."

All schools use portfolios that address a broad range of intelligences, encourage children to become reflective, self-directed learner, provide information to individualize instruction, and help parents see their children's progress. Although standardized tests have long been used to compare, rank, and track children, educators from these Northwest schools believe that assessment of young children should be designed to guide educational decisions about children, or as Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1995) put it, "to make school experiences and life better for children."

But What About Standards?

> Children mired in the morass of family and community decay can't benefit from red ribbons, higher standards, or educational technology; they need caring adults to pull them out of the muck and set them on solid ground – one at a time (Yatvin, 1992).

The broad definitions of curriculum and assessment utilized by these educators are sometimes in conflict with state standards – "top-down specifications of content linked to tests" (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Pat Edwards explains, "We can't do it all. Although we see that all our children have grown in all areas, how do we show that, when on standardized tests, not all our kids 'measure up?' When families move here, they ask two things, 'What are your test scores and how do they compare to others in the state?'" Karen Johnson writes, "We envision a school full of winners, and we try really hard to never discourage a child or a family. . . When you set one standard, there *will* be losers." She asks:

> Where is the value in pointing out HOW low B's achievement is relative to a standard? If there was help afterwards. . . if there was some additional means offered to help him meet the standard, then I am all for the testing. But without it, the test results will be an insult to B and to me. The tests quantify how low he is relative to other kids. That is not going to help me at all, and it will hurt him.

Some researchers share these concerns. Darling-Hammond (1994) argues that although well-conceived curriculum standards can be used as "tools for informing curriculum building, teaching practice, and assessment," they may instead leave the learner out, making it hard for him or her to build new knowledge and understandings (Goodman 1994). A 1992 study by Poplin and Weeres (cited in Nieto, 1994) concluded that students become more disengaged as the curriculum, texts, and assignments became more standardized. This is particularly true for poor and minority students, who often start out farthest from the standard and for whom "turning standards into simple yardsticks can be devastating" (Goodman, 1994, p. 39).

In addition to punishing children "who start out farthest from the standard," Noddings (1995) argues that the pressure to produce high test scores, starting in elementary school, may conflict with the goal of developing caring and competent people:

> Teachers can be very special people in the lives of children, and it should be legitimate for them to spend time developing relations of trust, talking with students about problems that are central to their lives, and guiding them toward greater sensitivity and competence across domains of care.

The increased emphasis on standards comes at a time when educators are beginning to understand the importance of developing children's multiple intelligences and at a time when more and more children are entering school with unmet social/emotional needs and suffering from the effects of poverty.

Poverty and Early Childhood Learning

According to a recent report by Bread for the World, an anti-hunger advocacy group, the incidence of childhood poverty is higher in the United States than in any other industrialized nation and our nation has the second highest gap between the incomes of its richest and poorest citizens. Of industrialized countries, only post-Communist Russia had a larger disparity. Researchers at Fordham University's Institute for Innovation in Social Policy reported that the country's social health index has fallen to its lowest point in almost 25 years, and those who are suffering most are children and young people. Child abuse, teen-age suicide, drug abuse, and the high school dropout rate all worsened in 1994, the most recent year covered by the study (cited in Ivins, 1996).

While being poor does not inevitably lead to problems in school, poverty's adverse effects on children and families have been well documented. Poverty gives rise to many types of deprivation and increases the likelihood that numerous risk factors are present simultaneously: in parents, child, health care, housing, support systems, schools, child care, and neighborhoods. Due to the interaction of multiple risk factors, children from poor and minority families are disproportionately at-risk for school failure. Nationally, poor children are three times more likely to drop out of school and poor teen girls are five and a half times more likely to become teen mothers (Children First for Oregon, 1994).

This year, the Tufts University Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy reported that about 12 million American children go hungry or are threatened with hunger. "Recent scientific evidence now demonstrates that the type of hunger we have in the United States – mild malnutrition – produces long-term and even permanent cognitive impairments in children" (cited in Ivins, 1996). A new study by government researchers examining poverty, race, and single parenthood finds that "poverty had the strongest effect on children's health." According to the study conducted by researchers at the National Center for Health Statistics, poor children were 3.6 times more likely than more affluent children to have only fair or poor health. Research indicates that life in near poverty is almost as detrimental to children's health and development as living just below the poverty line and that extreme poverty early in life is especially deleterious to children's future life chances (National Center for Children in Poverty, 1996). The recently concluded report from the Columbia University-based NCCP concluded that young children in poverty are more likely to:

- be born at a low birth weight;
- be hospitalized during childhood;

- die in infancy or early childhood;
- receive lower quality medical care;
- experience hunger and malnutrition;
- experience high levels of interpersonal conflict in their homes;
- be exposed to violence and environmental toxins in their neighborhoods;
- experience delays in their physical, cognitive, language, and emotional development, which in turn effect their readiness for school.

The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (1996) reports that family income is related to child maltreatment rates in nearly every category of maltreatment. Children whose families earned below $15,000 were:

- more than 22 times more likely to experience some form of maltreatment;

- more than 44 times more likely to be a neglected;

- sixty times more likely to die from maltreatment of some type under the Harm Standard and over 22 times more likely to die from abuse or neglect using the Endangerment Standard;

- nearly 56 times more likely to be educationally neglected.

According to J. Lawrence Aber, the director of the National Center for Children in Poverty, "The increasing number of poor young children reflects a 20-year trend that is having devastating consequences on children today whether they are toddlers or teenagers." "If there is one universal finding from educational research it is that poverty is at the core of most school failures," Hodgkinson (1995) concludes. Now, as in the past, SES remains the best predictor of a child's future earning power.

Thus, the call for standardization and testing to address issues of the quality of education ignores the fact that the cause of much of the difficulties our schools are experiencing lies outside the school building, embedded in increasing social and economic inequalities, unequal access to education opportunities, limited job opportunities, and a declining standard of living for the majority of Americans (Kozol, 1995; Berliner, 1992; Schneider & Houston, 1993). Schools, then, are neither responsible for our current social and economic woes, nor can they fix them. Yet schools, provided with adequate resources and in partnerships with families and their communities, can create a safe, nurturing school environment that fosters individual resiliency, enhances children's life choices, and prepares children to work toward a more just and caring society.

Well-conceived, flexible curriculum standards can provide a framework for local educators to reflect on and evaluate their own efforts to change their educational practices to better meet the needs of children and families in their own communities. Such standards should be designed to address the broad range of intelligences and competencies that children will need for success at school and beyond.

Conclusion. At a recent workshop at a Head Start center, teachers and family advocates were asked, "What do you want for the children in your care as they go through school and life? What is your vision of their future?" Their answers included a wide range of successful outcomes, including: education, opportunity, a clean, safe and healthy environment, emotional and spiritual support, moral strength, happiness, male role models, ability to make good choices, self-esteem, and a sense of responsibility. What was important to these educators was that schools continue the work they had started -- helping children become self-confident, contributing members of school communities and of a democratic society. The educators in these Northwest schools are tending these dreams.

REFERENCES

Banks, C. A., & Banks, J. A. (1995). Equity Pedagogy: An essential component of multicultural education. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 152-158.

Benard, B. (1993). Fostering resiliency in kids. *Educational Leadership*, November, 44-48.

Berk, L. E., & Winsler, A. (1995). *Scaffolding children's learning: Vygotsky and early childhood education.* Washington, DC: National Education for the Education of Young Children.

Berliner, D. C. (1992). *Educational reform in an era of disinformation.* Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, College of Education, Bureau of Educational Research and Services.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklin, S. K. (1982). *Qualitative research for education.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bowman, B. T. (1994). The challenge of diversity. *Phi Delta Kappan*, November, 218-224.

Bowman, B. T., & Stott, F. M. (1994). Understanding development in a cultural context: The challenge for teachers. In B. Mallory & R. New (Eds.), *Diversity and developmentally appropriate practices.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Boyer, E. L. (1983). *High school.* New York: Harper & Row.

Bracey, G. W. (1994). Research turns 10. *Phi Delta Kappan*, March, 567-569.

Bruanger, J. (1995). *Building equity in early literacy: Two case studies in improving the school literacy program.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Braunger, J. (1995). *Tensions to resolve: Improving literacy programs in the context of school reform.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Bredekamp, S. (Ed.) (1987). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age eight.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Bredekamp, S., & Rosegrant, T. (1995). Reaching potentials through national standards: panacea or pipe dream? In S. Bredekamp & T. Rosegrant (Eds.), *Reaching potentials: Transforming early childhood curriculum and assessment.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Briggs, S., Folkers, J., & Johnson, K. (1996). *Development of math curriculum based on constructivist theory.* Portland State University: Unpublished masters thesis.

Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Caudell, L. S. (1996). Voyage of discovery. *Northwest Education*, Fall, 8-15.

Clark, D. L., & Astuto, T. A. (1994). Redirecting reform: Challenges to popular assumptions about teachers and students. *Phi Delta Kappan,* March, 513-520.

Cohen, D. K. , McLaughlin, M. L. W., & Talbert, J. E. (1993). *Teaching for understanding: Challenges for policy and practice.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Commission on Standards for School Mathematics. (1989). *Curriculum and evaluation standards for school mathematics.* Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Daniels, H. (1995). Is whole language doomed? *Rethinking Schools,* 10(2). 1,5.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). National standards and assessments: Will they improve education? *American Journal of Education,* 102, 479-511.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* New York: The New Press.

Eisner, E. W. (1991). What really counts in schools. *Educational Leadership,* 48(5), 10-17.

Fielding, L. G., & Pearson, P. D. (1994). Reading comprehension: What works? *Educational Leadership,* February, 62-68.

Garmezy, N. (1991). Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 34(4), 416-430.

Goodlad, J. L. (1984). *A place called school.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Goodman, Y. M. (1989). Roots of the whole-language movement. *The Elementary school Journal*, 90(20), 113-127.

Goodman, K. S. (1994). Standards, not! *Education Week,* September 7, 39-42.

Hancock, L. (1996). Why do schools flunk biology? *Newsweek,* February 19, 55-62.

Hargreaves, A. (1995). *Educational Leadership*, 52(7), 14-19.

Heinemann, S., & Hewitt, D. (1992). *Pathways to Play.* St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Hodgkinson, H.L. (1995, October). What should we call people? Race, class, and the census for 2000. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 173-179.

Ivins, M. (October 26, 1996). Social health down. *Oregonian,* D, 6.

Kamii, C. (1989). *Young children continue to reinvent arithmetic.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Kostelnik, M. (1992). Myths associated with developmentally appropriate programs. *Young Children*, 47(40) 17-23.

Kozol, J. (1992). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools.* New York: Crown Publishers.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Lewis, C., Schaps, E.& Watson, M. (1995). Beyond the pendulum: Creating challenging and caring schools. *Phi Delta Kappan,* March, 547-545.

Lieberman, A. (1995). Practices that support teacher development: Transforming conceptions of professional learning. *Phi Delta Kappan,* April, 591-596.

Malaguzzi, L. (1993). For an education based on relationships. *Young Children*, 47 (1), 9-12.

Meier, D. (1995). *The power of their ideas: Lessons from a small school in Harlem.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Ministry of Education. (1992). *Dancing with the pen: The learner as a writer.* Wellington, New New Zealand: Learning Media Ltd.

Mission Valley Consortium. (1995-1996). *Professional development catalogue.* Polson, MT: Mission Valley Consortium.

National Center for Children in Poverty. (1996). *Wake up America: Columbia University study shatters stereotypes of young child poverty.* New York: Columbia University.

National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. (1996). *Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect.* Washington DC: Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Newmann, F. M. (1993). Beyond common sense in educational restructuring: The issues of content and linkage. *Educational Researcher,* 22(20), 4-13.

Nieto, S. (1994). Lessons from students on creating a chance to dream. *Harvard Educational Review,* 64(4), 392-426.

Ng, M., Gutherie, J.T., McCann, A., Van Meter, P., Alao, S. (1996). *How do classrooms characteristics influence intrinsic motivations for literacy?* Universities of Georgia and Maryland: National Reading Research Center, Reading Research Report No. 56.

Noddings, N. (1995). Teaching themes of care. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 76(9), 675-679.

Orfield, G (1994) Asking the right question *Educational Policy*, 8(4), 404-413

Pace, G (1993) *Making decisions about grouping in language arts* Portland, OR Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Phillips, C B (1993) The hundred languages of children *Young Children*, 49(1), 17-18

Rosegrant, T (1992) Reaching potentials in a multilingual classroom opportunities and challenges In S Bredekamp & T Rosegrant (Eds), *Reaching potentials: Appropriate curriculum and assessment for young children* Washington, DC National Association for the Education of Young Children

Routman, R (1994) *Invitations: Changing as teachers and learners* Portsmouth, NH Heinemann

Rutter, M (1985) Resilience in the face of adversity *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 147, 598-611

Schneider, J., & Houston, P (1993) *Exploding the myths: Another round in the education debate* American Association of Educational Service Agencies

Shor, I (1992) *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change* Chicago University of Chicago Press

Spandel, V (1996) *Seeing with new eyes* Portland, OR NWREL

Speigel, D L (1995) A comparison of remedial programs and Reading Recovery Guidelines for success for all programs *The Reading Teacher*, 49(2), 86-97

Stott, F., & Bowman, B (1996) Child development knowledge A slippery base for practice *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 11920, 169-183

Sykes, C J (1995) *Dumbing down our kids: Why America's children feel good about themselves but can't read, write, or add* New York St Martin's

Traill, L (1993) *Highlight my strengths: Assessment and evaluation of literacy learning* Crystal Lake, Ill Rigby

Tyack, D., & Tobin, W (1993) *The "grammar" of schooling: Why has it been so hard to change?* American Educational Research Journal, 31(3), 453-479

Wohlsletter, P., & Briggs, K L (1994) The principal's role in school-based management *Principal*, 74(2), 14-18

Wu, P C (1992) Opening one door *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 29(10), 15-18

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Yatvin, J. (1992). *Beginning a school literacy improvement project: Some words of advice.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

APPENDICES

CHERRY VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

POLSON, MONTANA

APPENDIX A

PHILOSOPHY
CHERRY VALLEY SCHOOL

We believe learning is a process that begins at birth and is lifelong. Consideration of equity and diversity are a basis for ensuring success for all students. Varying social contexts allow children to purposefully select, interpret and integrate information about their world. All students are expected to become confident, resourceful, disciplined, and self-motivated learners. Responsibility to self and community are emphasized.

Meaningful acquisition and application of content knowledge and process skills is achieved through problem solving, critical thinking, decision making and creativity . There are opportunities for student choice and time for discovery learning with student experience being central to instruction.

Literacy is the primary and most essential goal for all students. Literacy is defined as proficiency in not only the written and spoken word, but also includes numeracy, the arts, and emotions. The curriculum is presented in an integrated format respectful of individual learning styles and abilities. Flexible groupings are based on the nature of the activity and varying rates of growth and development of individual children.

Learning occurs most effectively in a culture that is safe and nurturing. School personnel, parents, and the community share the responsibility to work together to provide a positive school environment.

Rev. 4/96

APPENDIX B

Literacy program guidelines
Cherry Valley School

The acquisition of literacy is an integrated process involving listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading is a strategic activity through which the learner constructs meaning by interacting with text. Factors which influence the construction of meaning and the acquisition of reading strategies are: the interactions between teacher and student, the text, the purposes for reading and the context within which the literacy activities take place. The overall goal is to ensure that all children become able readers, writers, speakers, and listeners and are critical thinkers who can take responsibility for and direct their own lifetime of learning.

LISTENING:

As reading is a language activity, listening is promoted as a basis of literacy. Listening should be meaning-driven. Students will engage in a variety of listening experiences which will provide opportunities for the ongoing development of vocabulary building, basic concept comprehension, auditory association / identification / discrimination and other processing skills. These, in addition to experiences in developing prediction, problem solving, making inferences and sequencing are recognized as necessary prerequisites to an effective literacy program.

Assessment of progress: Teacher observation, comprehension activities (following directions, etc.)

SPEAKING:

Oral language skills are an integral component of a successful literacy program. A child's fluency in language is directly related to his/her fluency in reading. Activities aimed at promoting and developing the use of semantic (vocabulary and concepts) skills, pragmatic or social language, and good grammatic / syntactic language skills are considered crucial. Developing competence in comprehension and oral expression provide the avenue from which the child starts to build the bridge to reading and writing. With adequate listening and oral language skills in place, the child is ready to move toward applying these skills to the written symbol and its

GENERAL

Teachers will observe and note student responses and participation during literacy instruction. Children will be assisted to make choices about what they read and write. Students will not be labeled in terms of ability or achievement. Teachers will share in the task of communicating to parents the basis of our literacy program. Teachers will encourage parents to read to their children, discuss literature with them, and support and encourage their children's reading and writing progress. Teachers will participate in staff development opportunities and engage in reflective practice. A network of support and common implementation experiences is seen as an important part of the ongoing development of an effective literacy program.

PROMPTS TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE READING STRATEGIES

What you can say when someone is stuck or confused.

- do you want more time or help?

- what do you know that might help you?

- what can you do to figure that out?

- look at the picture and the first letter of the word.

- what word do you know that looks like that?

- what part of that word do you know? (are there any small words in the big word)

- skip the word and read to the end of the sentence.

- try that again, re-run the sentence.

- think about the story, does that make sense?

- does that look right, does it sound right?

- would you like me to tell you the word?

What you can say next.

- I liked the way you tried to figure that out.
- Good Job! You checked the picture and checked the word.
- You worked that out all by yourself.
- You can do it.
- Good try.
- You're thinking about the story and what would make sense.
- That's good reading.
- It's fun to listen to you read.
- Wow! You found the tricky part and figured it out all by yourself.

APPENDIX D

Big Books

Have you heard about "Mrs. Wishy Washy" and "Hairy Bear" and wondered where your kindergartners meet such characters? The answer is - **Big Books**. Big books are just that. They have enlarged text and illustrations for modeling the writing process.

Big books are used in many ways. Children learn to predict what will happen through pictures and shared reading of the book. They also learn about parts of a book, that we read from left to right and that words match our speech as we read. The mechanics of reading is also a concept of the big book - letter, word, sentence knowledge, spacing between words and punctuation marks. We predict the inside of a book by its cover and match the meaning of vocabulary to the text.

In kindergarten your child will be exposed to hundreds of books read to them by their teachers. The greatest gift you can give to your child is to read aloud to them and continue the process. Children initially learn about reading by listening to others read to them!

Sustained Silent Reading

At Cherry Valley this is a time during the school day where students choose books and silently read on their own. This is a very important time because it allows the students to choose a book that they are interested in and on their own they can look very carefully at the words and pictures to gain meaning from the story. Most students would do this on a daily basis, anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes depending on their age and interest.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX E

Today's Plan

Name :__________ Date :____________________

Read with Mr. C ○

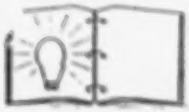
Spelling with Mr. C ○

Conference with Mr. C ○

SQUIRT ○

Practice Spelling ○

Draft Writing ○



Publishing

Practice Hand writing ○

abc

Choose and read a take home book. ○

Check out new take home book. ○

Developmental Spelling

Beginnings

Translation:
My Mom took us to the store to get some tomato juice.

FSUOR PEKNCBLYAHOIO.
NBPOUT HKYI LWhHIGAS.
EOAKOHIUI.
IHKILR.
IHNtODUIWI.

Consonants

One letter, usually the first one heard, is used to represent the word.

Translation:
I went out in a boat and caught a fish this big.

I w t n a b
K a K S b

Initial and Final Consonants

The first and last sounds are represented.

Translation:
The next day some more flowers grew.

Thens De
Sm mr FLos
gro

Vowel/Consonant Combinations

Consonants and vowels start to appear in the middle of words.

Translation:
Me and my best friend sledding downhill with my friends' Dad. His [Dad] made a jump for us.

Me an m bes frd
Sleddn dn. hill w m
frns dad. His
Mad a mp for s.

Words

All syllables in the words are represented.

Translation:
Chris,
You were sleeping. You woke up when everybody left.
You are clumsy. You were snoring. *[illegible]*

Chris
You are Sleping
You Wook
up wen
evriey Buty
left

You are
clumzzy
You were
snoring.
honshew

Standard Spelling

Children begin to build a repertoire of spelling patterns, and add to their store of sight words.

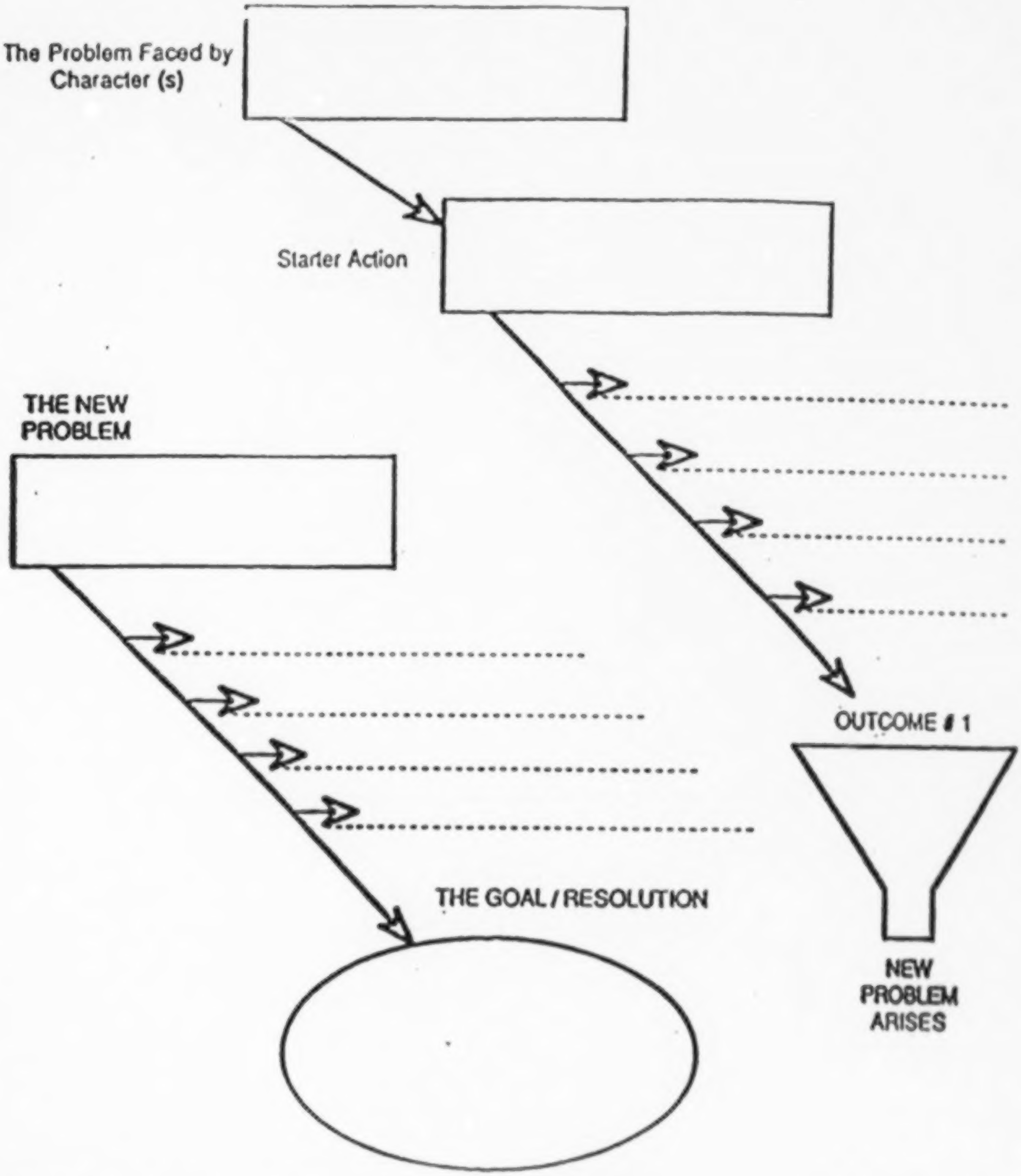
Translation:
Once upon a time, there was an old old woman who had a dog. The woman's name was Polly. The dog's name was Sally. Sally was a quiet dog, except for when she was hungry. So Polly knew what Sally wanted when Sally barked.

Once upon a time,
There was an old old
women. who ~~Have~~ had a dog.
The women's name was Polly.
The dog's name was Sally.
Sally was a quiet dog,
eesept for when
she was hunggry. So Polly
new what Sally wanted
when Sally barked.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX G

PROBLEM SOLUTION NARRATIVE MAP


The Problem Faced by Character (s)
Starter Action
THE NEW PROBLEM
OUTCOME # 1
NEW PROBLEM ARISES
THE GOAL / RESOLUTION

UTHOR________________________STORY TITLE________________________

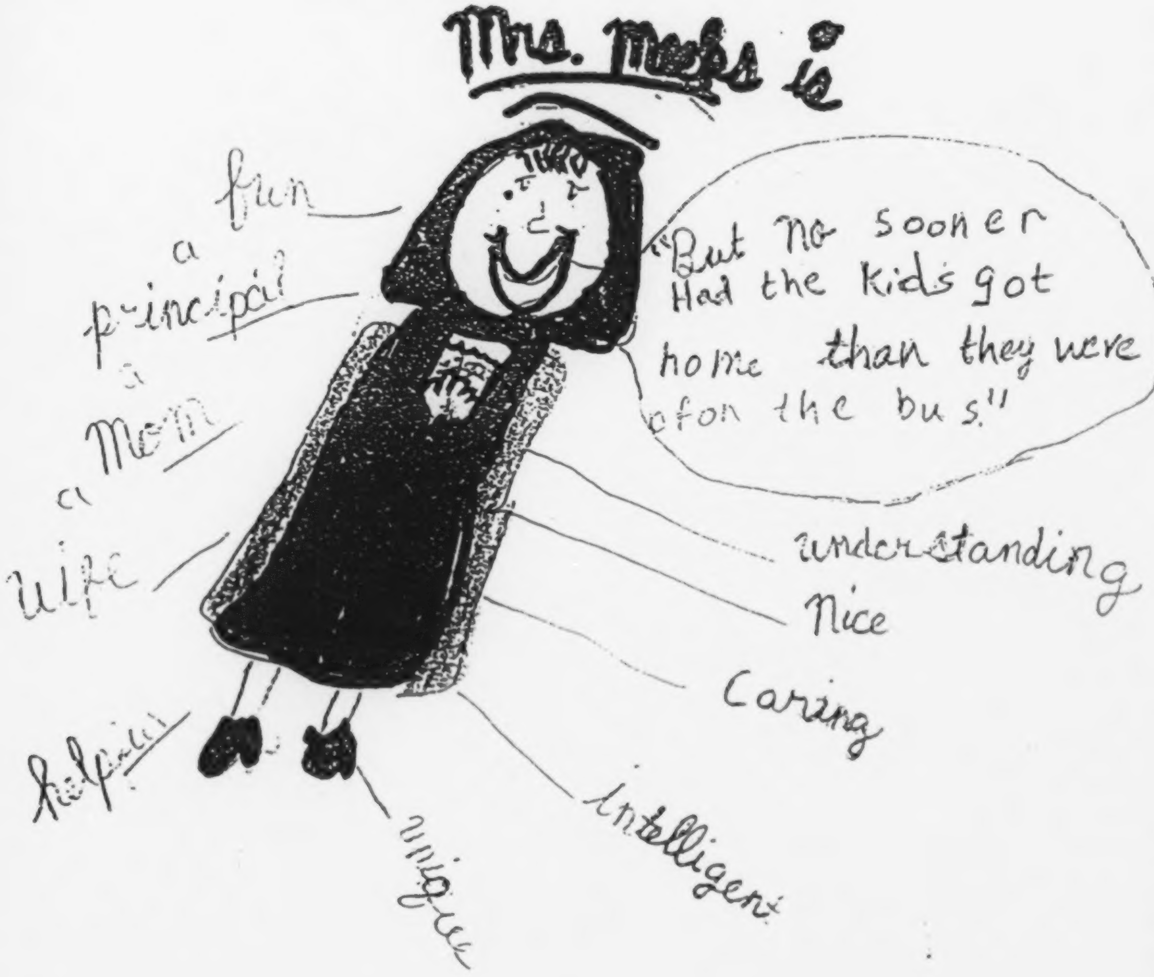
COPYRIGHT 1991 THINK NETWORK

107

108

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX I


Mrs. Moss is
fun
a principal
a Mom
a wife
helpful
unique
intelligent
Caring
Nice
understanding
"But no sooner Had the kids got home than they were on the bus."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

And she reads great books!

APPENDICES

HELEN BALLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

CAMAS, WASHINGTON

APPENDIX A

PRIMARY INTERVENTION PROGRAM
HELEN BALLER PARENT COMMENTS*

"Much love and gratitude to Kathy. Best thing that has happened to Emma - Can not say enough good about the program."

"My son I feel has benefited from the program..I think he is feeling better about himself."

"Thanks for including Jenna - it's her favorite time during the week."

"I believe the children at the kindergarten and first grade level need a person like Kathy. In my opinion, there should be more Child Development Assistants. Thank you so much for your help. Kurt's back to his old self."

"This program has really helped my child adjust to being in a single parent household. It has helped with her insecurities at school and at home."

"Keep up the good work Kathy, Nikole speaks highly of you, and really looks forward to her time in "Comfort Corner" with you, and all the other children involved. Thanks"

TEACHER COMMENTS*

"I feel that PIP has made a difference in helping kids feel important and develop self-esteem as well as learn social skills. Wish more kids could participate."

"PIP has made a big difference in the children's lives who have been able to go. I am thankful they have this place to go and learn to express their feelings and know there is at least one place to feel safe in their world."

"PIP provides a safe, comforting environment for children to come and share their feelings and problems. They know they are special and loved in the Comfort Corner."

"PIP provides an opportunity to share feelings in a non-threatening nurturing environment. Children develop self-confidence and ways to communicate to others how they feel without feeling threatened. It's wonderful to see PIP kids smile and feel good about who they are after meeting in the Comfort Corner."

*All survey results are available upon request.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX B

POET'S CORNER

As many of you have requested, following is the poem that was read at the Southern Conference:

When I'm building in the block room,
Please don't say I'm "Just Playing."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
About balance and shapes.
Who knows, I may be an architect someday.

When I'm getting all dressed up,
Setting the table, caring for the babies,
Don't get the idea I'm "Just Playing."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
I may be a mother or a father someday.

When you see me up to my elbows in paint,
Or standing at an easel, or molding and shaping clay,
Don't think I'm "Just Playing."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
I'm expressing myself and being creative.
I may be an artist or an inventor someday.

When you see me sitting in a chair
"Reading" to an imaginary audience,
Please don't laugh and think I'm "Just Playing."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
I may be a teacher some day.

When you see me combing the bushes for bugs,
Or packing my pockets with choice things I find,
Don't pass it off as "Just Play."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
I may be a scientist someday.

When you see me engrossed in a puzzle or some "plaything" at my school,
Please don't feel the time is wasted in "play."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
I'm learning to solve problems and concentrate.
I may be in business someday.

When you see me cooking or tasting foods,
Please don't think that because I enjoy it, it is "Just Play."
I'm learning to follow directions and see differences.
I may be a cook someday.

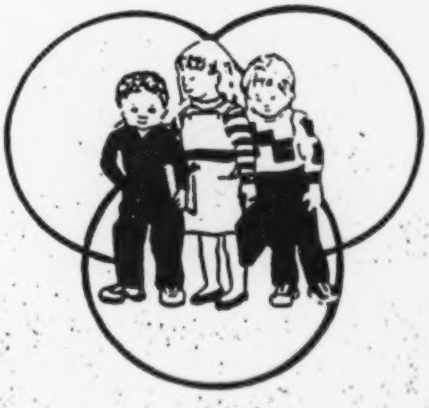
When you see me learning to skip, hop, run, and move my body,
Please don't say I'm "Just Playing."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
I'm learning how my body works.
I may be a doctor, nurse, or athlete someday.

When you ask me what I've done at school today, and I say "I Just Played."
Please don't misunderstand me.
For, you see, I'm learning as I play;
I'm learning to enjoy and be successful in my work.
I'm preparing for tomorrow.

APPENDIX C

Used by Tendoy Elementary School
Pocatello, ID

On the Way to SUCCESS in Reading and Writing with EARLY PREVENTION of SCHOOL FAILURE



A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO
PROVIDE STAFF DEVELOPMENT
AND RESOURCE MATERIALS
FOR SCREENING, CONFERENCING,
AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN
ACADEMICALLY SUCCESSFUL
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
FOR ALL FOUR, FIVE, AND SIX
YEAR OLD CHILDREN.

LUCEILLE WERNER
EPSF NATIONAL DIRECTOR

114 North Second Street
Peotone, Illinois 60468
(708-258-3478)
(800-933-3478)
FAX (708-258-3484)

EPSF AWARENESS PACKET

1/95

On the Way to SUCCESS in Reading and Writing

with

Early Prevention of School Failure

Nationally Validated Program
National Diffusion Network (NDN)
United States Department of Education (USDE)

1995 Profile

This program is part of a nationwide system (NDN) created to improve American education through the implementation, in local schools, of rigorously evaluated, effective educational programs. The program has been validated every four years by a federal panel of educators who have expertise in evaluation, dissemination, cost-effectiveness and program innovation which is based on research and *practice*. Standard scores of achievement must be significant for identified students over a period of time.

ROGRAM COMPONENTS

he program is based on the results of child growth and development and principles of earning as related to 4-5-6-7 year-old children.

ssessment

o evaluate each student's competencies in the essential learning outcomes of ommunication requires a comprehensive ongoing assessment beginning with a battery f nationally normed tests that provide useful information for planning an appropriate rogram for enticing kindergarten.

A second step in assessment is observing each child in a developmental classroom nvironment and keeping samples of his or her work in a portfolio. These are critical actors in evaluating the child's interests and progress.

A third step is the student and program evaluation process of collecting accurate and complete pretest and posttest data which is statistically analyzed annually and over a period of years to give educators ongoing confidence in the significance of educational gains made by each kindergarten child. Program modification is ongoing based on practice and research data.

Classroom Learning Environment

The program provides staff development and curriculum resources to assist the lassroom teacher in providing a risk-free developmental learning environment ppropriate for all 4-5-6 year olds.

ducational Planning
he literature-based problem solving curriculum provides opportunity for whole group, mall group, and individual center learning activities. The students with similar needs re provided direct instruction by the classroom teacher using the unit/theme activities r a wide range of other resource materials available. A researched developmental hecklist is a guide for the teacher in planning appropriate learning experiences.

ome-School Partnership
There are field-tested strategies and resource materials available to involve the family in heir child's education. The program involves parents from student's initial entrance nto school and receiving ongoing activities and classroom involvement throughout every school year.

Evaluation
The informational materials include guidelines for the classroom teacher beginning to keep a portfolio on each child: sample checklists, outlines for planning, methods and approaches to observing, as well as what work samples to keep in a child's portfolio. Teachers are encouraged to begin slowly and plan based on how much time they can devote to assessing each child. The project continue to assist adopters with evaluation of student impact by conducting annual and longitudinal evaluation studies and by supporting adopter research activities.

The program's record:

- **7,359 schools have been trained and involved in the program**
- **743 new schools received staff development and follow-up inservice during 1994**
- **614 certified trainers provide a program demonstration site and ongoing professional support to the schools in their region and state**

The program's cost:

- **Curriculum Resources and Assessment Instruments with Portfolio and Computer Program for Primary Educators - per team - $400**
- **Staff Development *Shared Cost* (NDN Program and State Facilitators share cost of consultants to the school)**

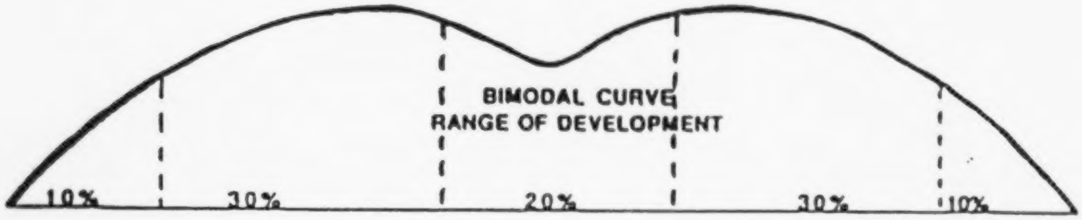
This nationally validated program is sponsored by:

The U.S. Department of Education
National Diffusion Network
and
Peotone 207-U Administrative School District

© Copyright: January 1993

EARLY PREVENTION OF SCHOOL FAILURE
Nationally Validated Program
RESPONDS TO CURRENT NEEDS

DEVELOPMENTAL RANGE IN A KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM



Considerably Below Age Level — 2 1/2 years

Considerably Above Age Level — 9 1/2 years

---

his graph, developed from data collected on 50,000 kindergarten students, :presents a class sample of 25 children. It demonstrates that more children are ›ming into school with advanced developmental skills or developmental needs ⁻sed on information from the EPSF assessment strategies.

oday's schools face a challenge unlike any in history. As Shepard and Smith state, "Children ›me to school with enormously different interests, aptitudes, and background experiences."(1) actors that influence these differences include: socio-economic background, working parents, ıck of quality early childhood day care, differing education of parents, medical advancements llowing more children to survive, and an increase in single parent families. All of these factors ave a direct influence upon the ability level of each child entering school for the first time. We ow have come to the conclusion that, given this wide variety of abilities, we must adjust our rograming to meet new demands.

ımerica 2000, an Education Strategy, is an action plan to move America toward six national ducation goals, will set the standards against which every *new American school* will be ıeasured.(2) The EPSF nationally validated program has effectively demonstrated in hundreds of dopter schools throughout the nation that *all* children can leave first grade demonstrating ompetency in reading and writing. The EPSF curriculum is designed to enable all students from liverse backgrounds to learn the skills, acquire the knowledge, and develop the attitudes ıecessary for them to reach their full potential in reading and writing. To provide levelopmentally appropriate educational practices, the EPSF program begins with an authentic ıssessment of each child's strengths and needs so the teacher can better facilitate learning tasks 'or each child. One type of curriculum will no longer meet the wide range of developmental levels 'ound in today's classrooms.

Teachers and parents working as partners in the program enhance the educational opportunities for all children.

ɟhepard, L.A. and Smith, M.L. "Synthesis of Research on School Readiness and Kindergarten Retention". Educational Leadership 44, No. 3 (Nov. 1988), pgs. 78-86.

2 United States Department of Education. America 2000, An Education Strategy. Washington, D.C.: USDE, 1990.

On the Way to SUCCESS in Reading and Writing with Early Prevention of School Failure

FOCUS for 1994-95

Background Information

The On the Way to SUCCESS in Reading and Writing with Early Prevention of School Failure nationally validated program has trained over 10,000 schools in the United States, Canada, Virgin Islands, Pacific Islands, and five foreign countries. The goal of the program is identification and curriculum modification for students *at-risk* of academic failure. The statistical program studies have proved *at-risk* students can be successful in reading and writing. At the end of second grade, the student's identified as *at-risk* in kindergarten, through appropriate learning experiences, reach the average of national norm groups in reading at the end of second grade.

As of 1992, a new direction for the program is toward prekindergarten. The adopter schools have evidence from the Early Prevention of School Failure program that 25% to 35% of all children who enter kindergarten are *not ready* to experience success. The request was to provide a developmental individual assessment instrument for prekindergarten and appropriate educational activities to meet the needs of the identified three- and four-year-old at-risk child.

Linking Developmental Programs with Initial and Ongoing Observation and Assessment Based on Child Growth and Development

	Initial Assessment	**Curriculum**	**Ongoing Assessment**
Prekindergarten Model for Technical Assistance to Prekindergarten Teachers, Administrators	IDEA assessment of child's developmental level for educational planning purposes.	Resources for children's thinking and learning.	Transitional written records: teacher/ parent observations, health center records, portfolio, etc.
Kindergarten: Early Prevention of School Failure	Initial assessment (standardized battery of instruments, observations, parent interviews) for educational planning purposes.	Integrated Literature-based learning activities for direct instruction with reading tapes, writing samples, and skill evaluation.	Transitional written records: portfolio, reading and writing samples, normed prepost test, battery profile, parent/teacher observations, etc.
First Grade: On the Way to SUCCESS in Reading and Writing Program	Reading and Writing checklist, teacher conferences, parent conferences, authentic assessments to plan educational program.	Literature-based age- and individual-appropriate developmental program curriculum, plus school curriculum with adaptations.	Transitional written records: portfolio, reading and writing checklists and samples, standardized test results, parent/teacher observations, ect.

APPENDICES

HARBORVIEW/CAPITAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

JUNEAU, ALASKA

APPENDIX A

Juneau School District

Philosophy

Across the curriculum in all subject areas, from kindergarten to twelfth grade, children not only learn about language but also learn through language. The Juneau School District Language Arts Program provides the practical skills along with an understanding of the value of using language as an everyday tool. It is our intent that "language arts" implies the integration of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and that these components should not be taught as a set of fragmented, isolated skills, but rather as interrelated processes, just as they are used in life. Development in each of the four areas can occur simultaneously. The goal of the district's program is to assist each student in developing the highest possible degree of conscious and informed use of language. Another goal is to have all students be confident readers and writers and know that they are such. It is our hope that all students read a wide variety of literature, write in a wide variety of genre, listen to many voices and viewpoints, and speak persuasively, humorously, and intelligently.

Children come to the Juneau schools with a variety of cultural and language backgrounds. Young children learn to write and read just as they learn to talk-- through experimentation with their own language. As students mature, language competencies expand and become more sophisticated. Students grow as readers and writers as they have daily opportunities for reading and writing. Students need choices in reading and writing to internalize their own language growth. Social and academic success is largely determined by a person's linguistic performance in generating language as a speaker and a writer, and in processing language as a listener and a reader. Applying current technology has also become key to overall effective communication and academic and social success.

The Juneau Language Arts Program emphasizes individual competencies as the foundation upon which increasingly complex communication strategies are built. Through a daily, ample diet of language arts activities and experiences students can become self reflective about their own usage and can set realistic goals for themselves as they move toward adulthood. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents in Juneau together develop and expand the language arts experiences of all students.

October, 1994

APPENDIX B

Juneau School District
Parent/Family Involvement Plan Guidelines

I. The PIP Will Promote and Support Responsible Parenting

Recommended Action Steps:

- Communicate the importance of positive relationships between parents and their children
- Disseminate parenting information, tips, and ideas
- Offer parenting workshops, videos and/or recorded messages
- Link parents to community family support services
- Reach out to all families, especially those that are less visible
- Establish policies that support and respect family responsibilities
- Provide an accessible parent information center to bolster parenting skills and understanding

II. The PIP Will Promote Consistent, Meaningful Two-Way Communication Between Home and School

Recommended Action Steps:

- Establish opportunities for parents and educators to share student strengths, learning styles, family concerns, and other "partnering" information
- Disseminate communication tools on a regular basis that are respectful of the home culture
- Provide clear information on the transitioning opportunities as children move from grade to grade, program to program, and building to building
- Conduct conferences at least twice a year which accommodate the varied schedules of parents
- Provide clear information regarding course expectations, student placement, school activities, student services, and optional programs
- Mail report cards and regular reports to parents with follow up conferences as needed
- Use the most current technology to increase the amount and frequency of home/school communications
- Translate communications to assist non-English speaking families
- Disseminate clear information on upcoming school reforms, policies, discipline procedures, and school goals
- Encourage immediate contact between parents and teachers when concerns arise
- Distribute student work for parent review on a regular basis
- Communicate both positive and negative information about behavior and achievements of students
- Provide opportunities for parents to communicate with principals and other administrative staff

VI. The PIP Will Promote Community Collaboration to Strengthen School Programs, Family Practices, and Student Learning

Recommended Action Steps:

- **Distribute information regarding cultural, recreational, academic, health, social and other services and resources within the community which serve families**
- **Develop partnerships with local businesses to assist student learning, schools, and families**
- **Foster positive working relationships with agencies which serve families**
- **Encourage employers to promote and support parental participation**
- **Foster student participation in community service**
- **Involve senior citizens in school volunteer programs**
- **Contribute to the school report card to the community which shares information regarding school programs and performance**

APPENDIX C

Completed Responses

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE	UNSATIS-FACTORY	NO OPINION
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION					
Course of study in relation to your child's needs.	16	13	3	1	
Learning materials in relation to your child's needs.	15	10	6	1	
Teaching staff in meeting your child's needs.	18	10	3	1	
Methods in meeting your child's needs	15	12	4	1	
Manner classes are organized	17	10	5	2	
Pupil-teacher ratio	2	3	6	24	
PROGRESS REPORTS					
Pupil report card	12	16	2	1	
Parent-Teacher Conferences	13	10	4	6	
Student Portfolios	17	12	2		1
GUIDANCE & COUNSELING					
Individual guidance	7	10	5	2	7
Group Guidance	8	14	4		5
Support groups	8	8	4		10
DISCIPLINE					
Classroom rules and management	16	10	4	1	
Playground rules and management.	4	13	7	5	1
Punishment meted out	4	7	5	4	8
COMMUNICATION					
Exchange of information between school and home.	19	9	3	1	
Newsletter	18	13	1		
ADMINISTRATION					
What are your feelings about the operation of the school?	9	15	6		1
Nature of contact with the principal.	10	9	4	1	8
Operation of the Hbv/Cap Site council	8	9	2	6	7
FACILITIES					
Maintenance of buildings/grounds	4	21	7	1	
Cleanliness of building	9	13	11	1	
Appearance of the buildings	6	13	12	3	
FOOD SERVICES	1	3	4	7	13
Cold Lunch	1	3	4		
BUS SERVICE					
Promptness	11	9	1		9

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Portfolio Definition

"A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits to the student and others the student's efforts, progress or achievement in given areas. This collection must include:

- student participation in selection of portfolio content;
- the criteria for selection;
- the criteria for judging merit; and
- evidence of student self-reflections."

NWEA Working Retreat, 1990: Aggregating Portfolio Data August 2-4, 1990

APPENDIX E

Juneau School District
LANGUAGE ARTS PORTFOLIO

INTRODUCTION

This folder represents the work of a Juneau student in an integrated whole language classroom as outlined by the Juneau School District's Language Arts Curriculum. In designing this portfolio, developmentally appropriate practices, defined by many well-known educational researchers and advocates were considered.

Our district philosophy as written in our new, 1994 Language Arts Curriculum states, *"It is our intent that 'language arts' implies the integration of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and that these components should not be taught as a set of fragmented, isolated skills, but rather as interrelated processes, just as they are used in life. Development in each of the four areas can occur simultaneously. The goal of the district's program is to assist each student in developing the highest possible degree of conscious and informed use of language. Another goal is to have all students be confident readers and writers and know that they are such. It is our hope that all students read a wide variety of literature, write in a wide variety of genre, listen to many voices and viewpoints, and speak persuasively, humorously, and intelligently."* It is the belief of the Juneau District that language is an essential key to academic success in all curriculum areas.

This belief echoes the State Board of Education's English/language arts standards for all students in Alaska. Through the portfolio process Juneau students will begin to demonstrate that they can meet the State's Standards for all Alaskan students, at a benchmark level appropriate to their age and development. These standards ask us to show how all students will:

1. Speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences.
2. Be competent and thoughtful readers, listeners, and viewers of literature, technical materials, and a variety of other information.
3. Identify and select from multiple strategies in order to complete projects independently and cooperatively.
4. Think logically and reflectively in order to present and explain positions, based on relevant and reliable information.
5. Understand and respect other people's perspectives in order to communicate effectively.

August, 1994

In Juneau the Language Arts Program in our schools includes but is not limited to: oral language experiences, read alouds, shared book experiences, independent reading, language experiences, writing-as-a-process, using developmental spelling, response logs, and includes opportunities for collaborative and cooperative learning. The curriculum was designed to extend to all content areas.

The work represented in this portfolio presents a comprehensive assessment of the child's educational achievement in language arts.

The Juneau portfolio was designed and refined by experienced classroom teachers, reading specialists, administrators, and parents.

August 1994

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

	Emergent	Beginning	Developing	Expanding	Independent
Comprehension	• Relies on memory for reading • Responds to stories • May label pictures • May tell a story from pictures using oral language • May pretend to read • May invent text with book language • Focuses on pictures for meaning rather than print	• Reads simple books in which text is repeated; (illustrations provide a lot of support) and demonstrates understanding in the following ways: - Recalls random details - Recognizes when the reading isn't making sense - Shows understanding that print carries meaning	• Reads books with varied sentence patterns; (illustrations provide a moderate amount of support) and demonstrates understanding in a few of the following ways: - Recounts sequence of events - Summarizes story - Predicts what will happen next - Backs up statements with proof from reading - Connects experiences with reading	• Reads books with long descriptions, challenging vocabulary; (illustrations provide low support) and demonstrates understanding in several of the following ways: - Remembers sequence of events - Summarizes story - Predicts what will happen next - Backs up statements with proof from reading - Connects and builds to draw conclusions - Uses prior knowledge with relevent information from the story to form an opinion - Connects experiences with reading	• Reads books with long descriptions, challenging vocabulary; (illustrations provide very little or no support) and demonstrates understanding in most of the following ways: - Remembers sequence of events - Summarizes story - Predicts what will happen next - Backs up statements with proof from reading - Connects and builds to draw conclusions - Uses prior knowledge to form an opinion - Connects experiences with reading - Evaluate/judges character, authors, books • Verbally responds to literature in depth and is beginning to shift this ability to writing
Skills/ Strategies	• Identifies own name on print • Understands "how" books work, e.g. top and bottom and front to back	• Recognizes that letters carry sounds • Begins to use context, grammatical, and/or phonics cues and cross checks with pictures • Matches words spoken to words in print • Locates a known word • Understands concepts about print, e.g. directionality, sentence, word, letter, space beginning, end	• Increases and refines use of context, language, and/or phonics cues, and begins to use cross checking to self correct • Begins to pause at appropriate places when reading orally • Knows the meaning of a period, question mark, and exclamation mark • Follows single step written instructions	• Uses a variety of ways to cross check and self correct • Begins to read orally with expression and with appropriate pauses • Knows the meaning of quotation marks and commas • Follows two step written directions	• Self corrects automatically • Confidently reads a story with appropriate expression • Follows written multi-step directions • Begins to ask questions about the structure of language
Attitudes/ Behavior	• Shows curiosity about print in environment • Participates in the oral reading of familiar stories	• Is willing to read • Focuses on print, supported by pictures • Reading is vocal	• Selects books independently • Shows familiarity with titles and authors • Is beginning to read silently	• Chooses appropriate books to read for pleasure • May choose books by author, topic, or a specific information • Usually reads silently for an extended period of time, sometimes vocalizing when text is difficult • Reads lengthier material	• Chooses to read a variety of materials for a variety of purposes • Often chooses reading over other activities • Reads silently for extended periods of time • Recommends books to others

Select the column(s) that best describe how a child habitually and naturally reads from a variety of materials at his/her "instructional reading level. (Instructional Level Material that is challenging but not frustrating with normal classroom instruction and support.)

6/24/94
Juneau, Alaska School District, 1994

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX F

STEPS TO FOLLOW WHEN READING ALOUD TO YOUR CHILD:

BEFORE READING:

1. Read the title and the author.

2. Look through the pictures and think aloud about what might be happening in the story.

3. Make guesses about what's going to happen next.

DURING READING:

1. Talk from time to time aboutyour guesses and how they are the same or different from what's actually in the story.

2. Make new predictions, based on what you have read so far. Then read on to see if you are right.

3. Invite your child to read a part of the book to you if it seems like the book might not be too hard.

AFTER READING:

1. Talk with your child about the story - try to connect it somehow with your child's life and the events that happen day-to-day.

2. You might want to ask your child to tell you his or her favorite part and the feelings that went with it.

3. Now and then, invite your child to tell the story back to you. This helps to develop comprehension.

HELPING YOUR BEGINNING READER AT HOME

Here are some things to say when your child comes to a hard word:

(Wait at least ten seconds to give your child a chance to figure it out independently. Then ask if he or she wants help.) If so, try the following prompts:

1. "What could you try?"
2. "What would make sense there? Is there anything in the picture that could help you?"
3. "What would sound right there?"
4. "Could you try rereading?"
5. "What sound does that first letter make?"
6. "Now reread it again and sound that first letter."
7. "Does the word look like another word you know?"
8. "Is there a part in this word that you know?"
9. "Now try rereading again."

Encourage your child to work out hard words independently but, if a word is really bogging the child down, just tell it to him or her. When reading becomes a word-by-word struggle, it loses meaning and becomes a joyless exercise.

If your child struggles on more than one word out of ten, chances are that the book is too difficult. If that's the case, there's nothing wrong with reading it together. It's really important to choose books that are not too easy and not too hard for the child - that helps the child to become a better reader simply by reading.

Here are some things you can say to encourage your child:

1.) I like the way you tried to work that out.

2.) That word makes sense and sounds right.

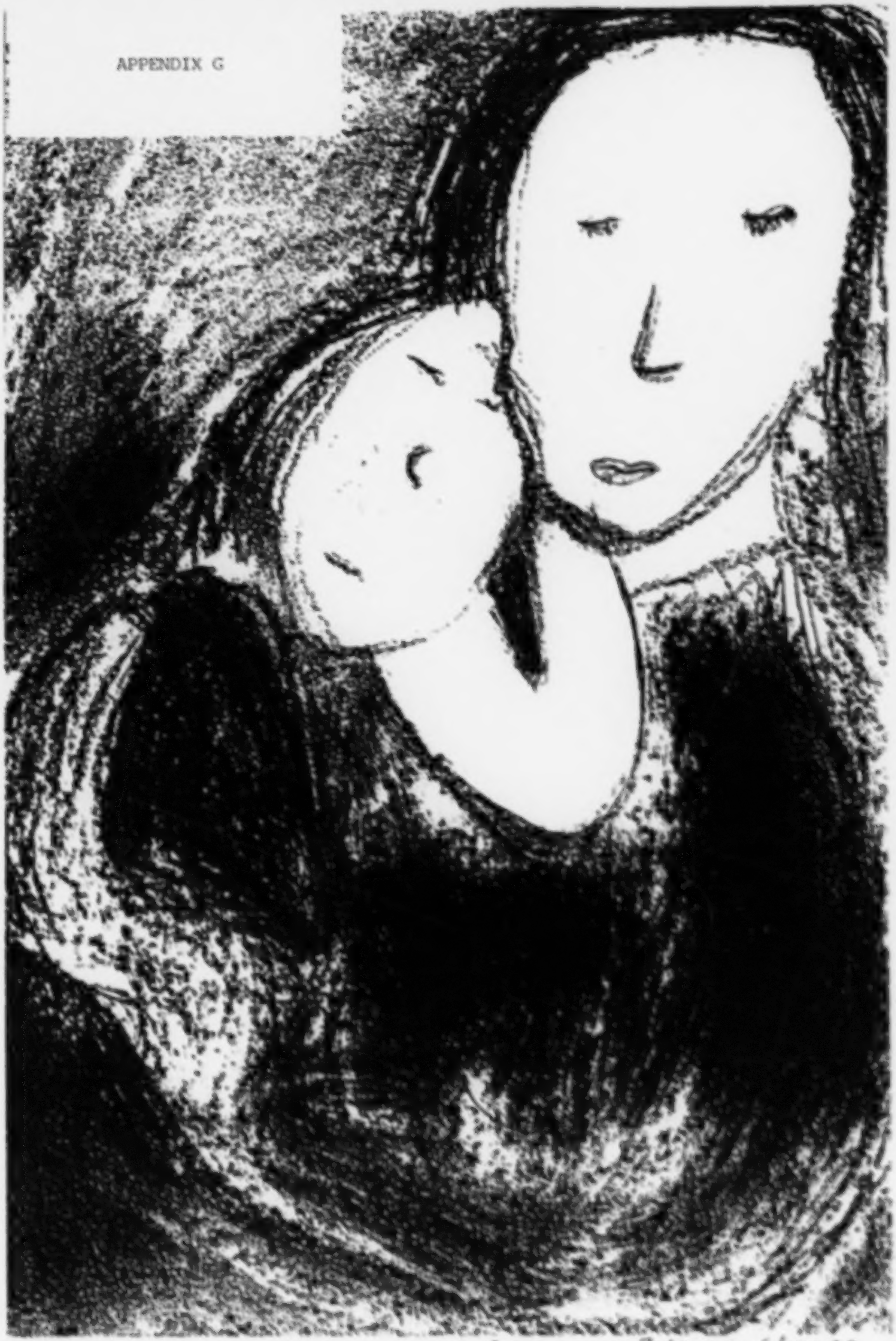
3.) You checked the picture to help yourself!

4.) I like the way you started reading over and tried that again. That's what good readers do.

5.) What you said looks like the word on the page! You were checking on the letters!

6.) I'm proud of you. You are becoming a good reader!

APPENDIX G



Rebecca Cheung

APPENDIX H

Brownie News

October 25, 1996

Dear Parents,

It has been a busy 2 weeks!! Last week our butterflies hatched! They went to California Friday afternoon where they will be released, and migrate to Mexico!

Some of the Activities include:

We made stained glass paper butterflies for the windows.
We made butterfly cycle bracelets.
We problem solved butterfly math.
We wrote about butterflies.
We had a fish day!
We printed fish, dissected fish, filleted fish, made brine, smoked fish, and feasted on smoked salmon.
We finished the bear unit with a Teddy Bear Picnic.
We started an ant farm.
We are practicing a play. (The Boy Who Lived With Bears)
We started learning about bats! We made bat ears and played an echolocation game.

Favorite Books:

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, by Eric Carle
The Honey Robber, by Eric Carle
The Teddy Bear's Picnic, by Jimmy Kennedy
Stelluna, by Janell Cannon

Important Dates:

Thursday, October 31-Halloween Party-12:30-1:50
November 6, 7, 8-Parent/Teacher Conferences-Morning school only-watch for schedules Monday
Friday, November 15-Swim Day

Bears eat fish so we made smoked salmon brine, printed fish, dissected fish, felleted fish, smoked fish, and ate fish!

Reading is Fun

KIDS' PAGE

Reading is Fun

Ione and Isabel paint a coho salmon before they make a fish print.

Liz Miyasati fillets the salmon.

Connor's mom, Bonnie dissects the salmon.

APPENDICES

MARY HARRISON PRIMARY SCHOOL

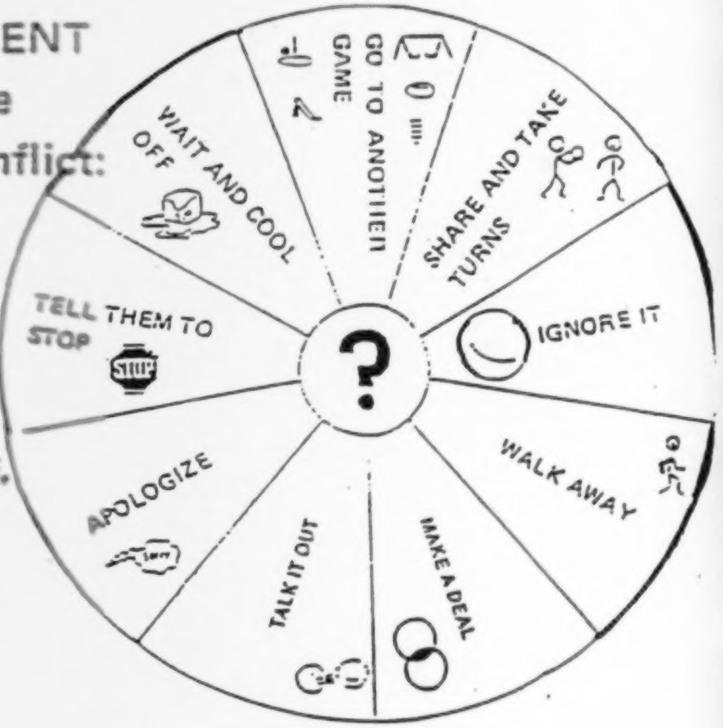
TOLEDO, OREGON

APPENDIX A

The Conflict Management Wheel (see example) provides students with useful strategies to solve their own problems when conflicts arise. These strategies will be posted and the concepts taught in assemblies and in all classrooms.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Try at least 2 of these ideas when you have a conflict:



FOR INTIMIDATION, INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE, OR FIGHTING, TELL THE TEACHER IMMEDIATELY.

Positive Action is a program that promotes wellness, responsibility, and healthy lifestyles. Each week, on the first and last day of the week, there will be two short all-school assemblies which will teach positive concepts such as kindness, responsibility, honesty, etc. This common language will help us set our sights on positive actions. You and your preschoolers are invited to attend our assemblies.

A Student Study Team, made up of teachers and specialists, meet regularly to discuss students who are experiencing difficulties with academic or behavioral progress. Parents may request a meeting at any time if your child needs special assistance. Frequently a Behavior Plan is created to help a student to self monitor and increase home-school communication.

At Mary Harrison, we are creating an environment of respect. We are saying to children: "We have faith in you and your ability to make good decisions. You can solve your own problems." We cannot force children to behave. But we can create a nurturing environment with clear expectations and consequences that encourages every child to be a positive, contributing member of our community.

APPENDIX B

VISION FOR TOLEDO TRANSITION TEAM PROCESS:
What we dream it to be!

CLEAR & UNIVERSAL TRANSITION PROCESS FOR LIFE	KNOWLEDGEABLE AND COMFORTABLE FAMILIES	CLEAR AND COMMUNICATED TIMELINES	KNOWLEDGEABLE & COMFORTABLE STAFF
To meet the transition needs of all families in all areas of Lincoln Co.	Parents feel comfortable asking questions and know how to find answers	To help families and children early enough to adjust to the transitioning process	Staff is familiar with the unique needs of the incoming child
To develop a written plan of transition for others to follow easily!	Parents can communicate openly and feel comfortable to do so	Preparation is done early	Easy transition where all staff members know the child's needs before they enter (having observed the child before hand)
Ongoing education for families and staff	Open communication lines between parents and teachers	To start from birth with education on assessing schools	Teachers are prepared for the special needs of the children and given enough time to research
Families know what to expect	Parents feel welcomed into school and get into the normal flow of public school	There is an established time for communication for transition team	More involvement of kindergarten teachers in IFSP and placements
Regular ongoing process in place	Parents and children prepared and comfortable with transition into school system	Calendar of transition process	More individual information between child/parent and teacher
All staff and families involved in planning	The family and child feel comfortable going into the next environment	Set procedures in place with timelines	
Children make easy, successful transitions forever	Parents feel knowledgeable about the transition process	Timelines are clearly defined to allow in-depth planning for the child and family	
Ways to help families understand what to expect upon entering the public school system (sometimes meetings aren't well attended)	The child feels comfortable about the transition; is excited	School will have family and child history of pre-kindergarten experience so can better plan and increase communication	
"Transition" becomes more than one stressful IFSP/IEP meeting held hurriedly in May/June	Parents feel that they are an integral part of the transition team process		
Transition process clearly defined for families of typically developing children as well as special needs children	Parents attend group meetings		

VISION FOR TOLEDO TRANSITION TEAM PROCESS:
What we dream it to be!

CLEAR & UNIVERSAL TRANSITION PROCESS FOR LIFE	KNOWLEDGEABLE AND COMFORTABLE FAMILIES	CLEAR AND COMMUNICATED TIMELINES	KNOWLEDGEABLE & COMFORTABLE STAFF
Many resources are available to each member of the team to help in transition; each member is an expert in some aspect	Open communication between families and school		
Consider whole child (social,educational and health)	Families feel welcome & comfortable in schools & with staff		
Transition packet which is "friendly" for ALL parents so they know expectations	Family members are comfortable and come in any time		
Kindergarten teacher is aware of special needs students ahead of time and has communicated with parents before school	To make the transition process easy enough for parents to follow		
Transition is a system which flows from preschool to kindergarten	Mentors for families of incoming children		
Nurse is more involved in transition process for early intervention	Parents have knowledge about the new school: its teaching philosophy, layout and services available		
The transition process encompasses ALL families	Existence of a parent assistance group (a network of parents to help parents with problems, transition, special needs, etc.)		
Follow-through of plans (and brainstorming)			
Evaluation process in place from families			
Clear interagency communication and collaboration			

APPENDIX C

This is a survey we at Mary Harrison are asking you to fill out for us. It is about your child's start to school. These results will help us make a even better start next year.

. Did you know what room or teacher your child had before the 1st day?
Yes **No**

Comments:____

. Did your child feel welcome at school? **Yes** **No**

Comments:____

. Did you feel welcome at school? **Yes** **No**

Comments:____

. When you left your child at school, did you feel they were in a safe, caring place? **Yes** **No**

Comments:____

. Did you have specific concerns or ?s that did not get answered?
If so, what were they? **Yes** **No**

Comments:____

. Was there something special about your child's 1st day? **Yes** **No**

Comments:____

THANK YOU! Your time is greatly appreciated.
Please return this survey to your child's teacher.

APPENDIX D

Home/School Packet

This is your child's Home/School packet. There are three main items enclosed. A book, a book journal (the small journal) and a writing journal. The book enclosed is one your child has chosen. Information about this book and journal can be found on the front of the packet holding the book. In order to feel comfortable about reading children need to feel safe enough to take risks. Your arms are the safest place your child knows. Read these books with them, talk to them, and let me know how your child felt about the book. Did they enjoy it? Were they able to tell you the story after you read it to them? Could they predict what would happen next? Did they know the story before you read the book? Were they looking or pointing at words? Could they recognize letters? words?

The writing journal is the 3rd item in your packet. Please have your child make one entry each week. Your child can draw a picture and have you write about what they have done. Your child can do their own writing. They can copy words from their environment. If they do copy words encourage them to accompany the words with pictures to help them remember the text.

If you have questions feel free to contact me or write a note in the journal. If your child returns their journal on the following Monday I will respond to their entry! Have fun with this!!! As the year progresses a fourth item will be enclosed. This will be a math journal with ideas for activities that will reinforce the math concepts we are studying in the classroom.

APPENDIX E

Resolving Conflict Creatively Program
National Center

JCATORS

IAL
ONSIBILITY

It is possible to live in peace
— M. Gandhi

> *According to a newly-released study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a child dies from gunshot injuries every 98 minutes in America. This is shameful and unacceptable in a nation that pretends to be decent and moral and to offer fair opportunity. We must all work together to see that the violence against our children is stopped, that our schools can be turned back into places of nurturing and learning rather than the war zones which some of them have become, and that every child has a safe start in life with the support of caring parents and communities. I hope that we can begin to deal with this crisis by trying to teach our children that violence is not the way to resolve conflicts. The kind of anti-violence curriculum that Linda Lantieri and others have been working on in your schools is crucial. I wish the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program could be put into every classroom in America, because we are not going to deal with the violence in our communities, in our homes, in our nation, until we begin to deal with the basic ethic of how we resolve disputes and begin to place an emphasis on peace as the way in which we relate to each other.*
>
> *—Marian Wright Edelman*
> *President, Children's Defense Fund, May 26, 1995*

THE RESOLVING CONFLICT CREATIVELY PROGRAM (RCCP) is a pioneering school-based program in conflict resolution and intergroup relations that provides a model for preventing violence and creating caring, learning communities. RCCP shows young people that they have many choices besides passivity or aggression for dealing with conflict; gives them the skills to make those choices real in their own lives; increases their understanding and appreciation of their own and other cultures; and shows them that they can play a powerful role in creating a more peaceful world.

RCCP began in 1985 as a collaboration between Educators for Social Responsibility Metropolitan (NY) Area and the New York City Board of Education. In the past ten years, the program has developed into a highly effective partnership between a public and private agency. It is now the largest program of its kind in the country. This year RCCP will serve 5,000 teachers and 150,000 children in 325 schools nationwide, including New York City and eight diverse school systems which are in various stages of replication: the Anchorage and North Slope Borough School Districts in Alaska; the New Orleans Public Schools in Louisiana; the Vista Unified School District in Southern California; the South Orange-Maplewood School District and West Orange Public Schools in New Jersey; the Lawrence Public Schools in New York; and the Atlanta Public Schools in Georgia.

The overall goals of the RCCP National Center are:

o to prepare educators to provide high quality instruction and effective school programs in conflict resolution and intergroup relations in a variety of settings across the country.
o to transform the culture of participating schools so that they model values and principles of creative, nonviolent conflict resolution.

(over)

CCP National Center 163 Third Avenue #103, New York, New York 10003 Telephone: (212) 387-0225 Fax: (212) 387-0510

The program's primary strategy for reaching young people is professional development of the adults in their lives—principals, teachers, and parents. Through RCCP, we work intensively with teachers, introducing them to concepts and skills of conflict resolution, and continue supporting them as they teach those concepts and skills in an ongoing way to their students. RCCP provides teachers with in-depth training, curricula, and staff development support; establishes student peer mediation programs; offers parent workshops; and conducts leadership training for school administrators.

An independent evaluation of RCCP released in May 1990 by Metis Associates found the program to be exemplary. Over 98% of the teachers agreed that mediation gave children who were trained as mediators an important tool for dealing with everyday conflicts between students and 71% of the teachers surveyed said the program led to less physical violence in the classroom.

The New York City RCCP is in the final year of a three-year, intensive, independent evaluation of the program made possible, in part, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The evaluation looks at the impact of the program on young people, the readiness of teachers, and the levels of importance of each program component. The National Center will work closely with RCCP-New York to learn from the evaluation results and to create appropriate evaluation instruments for the national dissemination of the program.

The RCCP National Center provides leadership and support for those local agencies who wish to replicate RCCP's work and to provide the kind of assistance schools need to shape successful violence prevention programs. It also helps train local staff to implement the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program as well as ensure its quality at all sites and strengthen and support other existing efforts.

As with RCCP in New York City, a multi-year process is envisioned in which the school systems involved in replicating RCCP assume increased responsibility for funding it each year. Foundations and individual philanthropy continue to play a key role in leveraging these public sector commitments. They also provide the program the financial security to foster a standard of excellence that from the beginning has characterized the attention given to the teachers, administrators, parents, and students involved in the program.

RCCP has been recognized by such national leaders as Secretary of Education Richard Riley, Attorney General Janet Reno, and Children's Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman. Many local leaders—teachers, administrators, and parents—recognize the need for the program as well. Ten years after its inception as a small pilot in Community School District 15 in Brooklyn, the RCCP National Center is striving to contribute significantly to the prevention of violence and the creation of more peaceful classrooms, schools and communities. o

For more information, contact:

Linda Lantieri, Director
RCCP NATIONAL CENTER
163 Third Avenue, #103
New York, New York 10003
Phone: (212) 387-0225; Fax: (212) 387-0510

APPENDIX F

MARY HARRISON SCHOOL VISION

We are a sharing, caring community, devoted to life-long learning.

CORE BELIEFS

1. All children have a right to learn in a caring, safe, nurturing environment that helps develop a positive self concept.

2. We are committed to developing strong school/family/community partnerships.

3. We believe in using Developmentally Appropriate Practices. Key elements include:
    - learning basic skills through active participation
    - understanding that growth occurs at each child's developmental level
    - development of the whole child includes academic, physical, social, and emotional growth
    - high expectations for all students
    - challenging each child in all areas of intelligence
    - authentic assessment is part of instruction and is meaningful to families and school community
    - knowledge and skills can best be learned through integrated instruction and applying information to projects
    - learning styles vary and we need to honor them
    - learning environment considers age and individual appropriateness
    - collaboration and cooperation are essential
    - multiage groupings is a strategy that enhances Developmentally Appropriate Practices

We believe that all of us, children and adults, should use these guiding principles to create a community of creative, critical thinkers, responsible members of society and life-long learners.

> "A teacher has to be a prophet who can look
> into the future and see the world of tomorrow
> into which the children of today must fit."
>
> Anonymous

APPENDIX G

WRITING AT MARY HARRISON

DRAFT (3/7/96)

We believe that writing is a developmental process that begins at an early age. We believe that reading, writing and spelling go hand in hand. We can do much in our classrooms to give children the practice and confidence that they will need to become proficient adult writers. During the 1995-96 school year our staff is concentrating on strategies to develop student writing, tools that will provide assessment and instructional needs and the development of a policy that shapes our writing instructional program.

We can use the natural interest that children have in writing by encouraging their beginning steps, providing guidance and practice, and knowing when and how to move them along the road of continual improvement. By understanding the basic developmental nature of written expression we can all make children see writing as enjoyable and purposeful process. The foundation we lay in the early primary years is an important step toward the Benchmarks and CIM outcomes.

The Mary Harrison Staff believes that:

- Writing is developmental
- Children need to write regularly
- Children learn from modeling (staff, peers and family)
- Children learn from observation, reading, copying, tracing, etc.
- Writing is used for a variety of purposes
- Children should write for a variety of audiences
- Writing should be valued by students, teachers and family
- Writing is best accomplished in a risk-free environment
- Writing is a form of communication

Characteristics of a writer that are valued:

- risk taking
- creativity and imagination
- originality
- variety
- knowledge and skills
- growth
- illustrations
- process
- structure
- interest and desire
- self-evaluation
- enjoyment
- accomplishment
- purpose
- making sense to the reader and writer

Appropriate assessment and ways of showing growth in the writing process:

- writing samples
- observation
- student/teacher conferences
- checklists (bands)
- self-evaluation
- self-reflection
- scoring guides for self-evaluation
- scoring guides of writing samples - narrative only
- monitoring continuous progress
- measuring individual growth
- anecdotal records
- portfolio (collection of evidence)
- looking at standards

Developmental Stages of Writing

(ages are approximate)

Preconventional (ages 4-6)

- makes marks other than drawing on paper
- relies on pictures to convey meaning
- labels pictures
- tells about own writing
- writes random recognizable letters

Emergent (ages 5-7)

- sees self as writer
- copies name and familiar words
- uses pictures and print to convey meaning
- pretends to read own writing
- prints with upper-case letters
- uses beginning/ending consonants to make words

Developing (ages 5-8)

- takes risks with writing
- begins to read own writing
- writes names and favorite words
- writing is from top-bottom, left-right, front-back
- interchanges upper and lower case letters
- uses beginning, middle, and ending sounds to make words
- begins to write noun-verb phrases

Beginning (ages 6-9)

- writes pieces that self and others can read
- begins to write recognizable sentences
- writes with some descriptive words
- experiments with capitals and punctuation
- forms many letters legible
- uses phonetic (spelled like it sounds) spelling to write independently
- spells some words correctly
- begins to revise

Expanding (ages 7-9)

- begins to consider audience
- writes pieces with beginning, middle, and end
- revises by adding description and detail
- listens to peers' writing and offers feedback
- edits for capitals and periods correctly
- forms letters with ease
- spells many common words correctly

Bridging (ages 8-10)

- begins to write for various purposes
- begins to organize ideas in logical sequence
- begins to develop paragraphs
- begins to revise by adding literary devices
- develops editing and proofreading skills
- uses strategies to spell difficult words correctly

APPENDIX H

ART

by Room 7
Mary Harrison School

I LOVE ART.
Art is your imagination.
It is expressing feelings.
It is COLORS.

Art comes from the mind, the eye, and the hand.
Art is thinking of wonderful pictures.
It makes me feel glad, wonderful, and free.

Art is drawing the world.
You can make art with most anything...paper, wood, clay.
Art makes me imagine and think about things.

You can paint yourself on paper.
You can use different kinds of tools.
Art makes me feel like a wild deer released from a trap.
Art is FUN.

Art makes me feel like a dolphin
diving in the sea on a warm summer morning.
Art makes me feel like a butterfly flying high in the sky.
It makes me feel special, because no one else does art like me.

Art is a diamond in the sky.
When I do art, I feel like I'm in the warm sun.
I am like a beautiful flower sprouting in a meadow.
Art is drawing birds, designs, shapes.
It's creative.

When I'm doing art, I feel like I have magical wings.
Art makes me feel like an orca in the sea.
Doing art reminds me of the gifts people give.
I love art.

APPENDIX I

Classification Task: School Stores

Benchmark Level: Pre-1st / 1st

Foundation Skills Rubrics to be used: Collaborate, Quantify
Concise Description of the Task: Children will sort materials such as rocks, shells, cones, etc. They will display these items and label their attributes.

Knowledge and Skills:

Understanding of classification and sorting.

Collaboration skills:
Sharing, listening, explaining thinking processes, respecting ideas of others, compromising, staying on task, and taking responsibility for contributing.

Performance and the Products: Students will sort items into logical groups, display their merchandise, label the items by attributes, and make a price for each item or group of items. They will collaborate to complete their "store".

Description of a Successful Performance: Students will collaborate to create a store that is organized and pleasing to the eye. Their merchandise will be sorted, labelled, and priced. After all stores are set up, the students will have an opportunity to "shop" with a given amount of play money.

Approximate Time: 3 hours

Resources and Materials: Sign-making materials (posterboard, paper, pens, tape, etc.), several collections of items with multiple and varied attributes: rocks, shells, cones, beads, buttons, leaves, flowers, etc.

Scoring Guide

5 Our merchandise was sorted into groups and priced.
The groups were clearly labeled and we had reasons for our labels.
We worked together and listened to each others' ideas.
Everyone was involved.
Our store was pleasing to look at.

3 Some of our merchandise was sorted. Some was priced.
The groups were labelled, but some were not clear. We didn't always have a reason for our groups.
We worked together some of the time.
Sometimes certain people were bossy or not listened to.
Our store was a little messy.

1 Our merchandise was not sorted or priced.
The groups were not labelled clearly. We didn't have reasons for our groups.
We didn't work together. We didn't listen to each other.
Some people didn't help.
Our store was not pleasing to look at.

What I liked about our store:

How we could have improved our store:

NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

Dr. Ethel Simon-McWilliams
Executive Director

Dr. Carol Thomas
Associate Executive Director

Assessment and Accountability Program
Dr. Dean Arrasmith, Director

Center for National Origin, Race, and Sex Equity
Joyce Harris, Director

Child and Family Program
Dr. Theresa Elofson, Director

Education and Work Program
Dr. Larry McClure, Director

Northwest Comprehensive Technical Assistance Center
Carlos Sundermann, Director

Northwest Educational Technology Center
Dr. Seymour Hanfling, Director

Rural Education Program
Dr. Steve Nelson, Director

School Improvement Program
Dr. Bob Blum, Director

Development and Communications
Jerry Kirkpatrick, Director

Planning and Service Coordination
Dr. Rex Hagans, Director

The mission of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) is to improve educational results for children, youth, and adults by providing research and development assistance in delivering equitable, high quality educational programs. NWREL provides research and assistance to education, government, community agencies, business and labor.

Board of Directors

Dr. Trudy Anderson
Administrator
Idaho Division of Vocational Education

Scott Andrews
Teacher
Miles City School District (Montana)

Dr. John Anttonen
Director
Rural Education Preparation Partnership
University of Alaska

Gus Araujo
Palisades International
(Oregon)

Dr. Teresa Bergeson
Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mike Bernazzani
Superintendent
Educational Service District No. 105
Yakima (Washington)

Jacob Block (Chairperson)
Superintendent
Polson Public Schools (Montana)

Sally A. Brownfield
Teacher
Hood Canal School District
(Washington)

Dr. Bob Burns
Representative for Oregon Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mardene Collins
Teacher
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (Alaska)

Nancy Dees
Puyallup School Board
(Washington)

Marilynn Eichinger
Informal Education Products, Inc.
Portland (Oregon)

Dr. Robert Everhart
(Vice Chairperson)
Dean
School of Education
Portland State University (Oregon)

Dr. Anne Fox
Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. N. Dale Gentry
Dean
College of Education
University of Idaho

Kathleen Harrington
Director
Plymouth Child Care Center
(Montana)

Diana Herschbach
Board Member
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Board (Alaska)

Dr. Shirley Holloway
Alaska Commissioner of Education

Spike Jorgensen
Educational Consultant
Harold Webb Associates
Tok (Alaska)

Nancy Keenan
Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. David Peck
(Secretary-Treasurer)
Superintendent
Pocatello School District
(Idaho)

Dr. Nancy Ruth Peterson
Chairperson
English Department
Moscow School District
(Idaho)

Christopher Read
Teacher
Billings Catholic Schools
(Montana)

Dr. Donald Robson
Dean
School of Education
University of Montana

Joan Schmidt
President
Montana School Boards Association

Dwight Souers
Teacher
Bethel School District (Oregon)

Dr. Nikki Squire
Superintendent
Hillsboro School District
(Oregon)

Robert Walp
Vice Chairman
General Communication, Inc.
(Alaska)

101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204-3297
(503) 275-9500 FAX (503) 275-9489 Internet: info@nwrel.org

4/97